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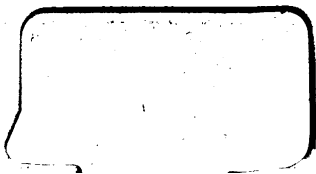
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The book cover features a dark, textured background. At the top, there is a stylized illustration of a white house with a dark roof, nestled among dark, silhouetted trees. A path leads from the foreground towards the house. The entire scene is framed by a decorative border with floral motifs in the corners. A large, white, stylized dagger or sword is positioned vertically in the center, its hilt at the top and its point at the bottom, passing behind the title text.

THE LONELY HOUSE

TRANSLATED BY
MRS. A. L. WISTER

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The Lonely House

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FRANZ AND ANNA

The Lonely House

From the German of
ADOLF STRECKFUSS
Author of "Too Rich," "Castle Hohenwald," etc.

By
MRS. A. L. WISTER
Translator of "The Old Mam'selle's Secret," "Gold Elsie," "The
Second Wife," "The Happy-Go-Lucky," etc.

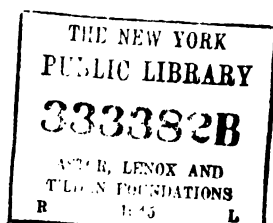
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CHARLOTTE WEBER-DITZLER



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I TAKE PLEASURE IN INSCRIBING THIS
TRANSLATION—THE LAST I SHALL EVER
COMPLETE—TO THE CHILDREN AND
GRANDCHILDREN OF THOSE WHO SO KINDLY
WELCOMED THE FIRST, PUBLISHED A LIFE-
TIME AGO

ANNIS LEE WISTER

"LINDENSHADE,"
WALLINGFORD, PA.
September, 1907

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The Lonely House



CHAPTER I.

THE PROFESSOR'S PERSISTENCE.

UKRAINE! Ukraine! For years I had longed to spend some weeks in Southern Ukraine. The descriptions I had read of its wonderful mountains had greatly attracted me; I was certain of adding there many valuable specimens to my collection; that section of country had been so rarely visited by entomologists that I might even hope to enrich our German fauna with a new species. Some years before a butterfly-collector from Vienna had discovered there the caterpillar of the beautiful *Saturnia cæcigena*, found previously only in Dalmatia. Why might I not hope for something equally interesting?

The scenery of Southern Ukraine is not thought to be very fine: the mountains are

BY F. L.

much less imposing than in other Alpine districts, but the Carpathian range is said to have many very interesting caves, and strange formations of rock, while for the naturalist its fauna and flora offer a rich field for investigation in its mountain fastnesses and deep valleys.

If travel in that section of the country were only not attended with such risk and inconvenience! Travellers who seemed thoroughly familiar with its political and social condition warned me seriously not to attempt going thither. The only tolerable accommodation for strangers, they said, is to be found in the larger towns—Laibach, Adelsberg, etc., and on the high road followed by tourists; as soon as the traveller attempts to penetrate the interior he finds only wretched inns, no comfort of any description, and a poverty-stricken peasantry, speaking the dialect of the country, and understanding not one word of German. All expeditions into the valleys are fraught with discomfort and even hardships. Nevertheless, little alluring as were the accounts given me of the country, the prospect of adding to my collections—I am a naturalist

—an entomologist—was so tempting that when I had a longer vacation than usual I determined to fulfil a long cherished desire and to pass a spring in Southern Ukraine.

And then the question arose as to what place I should make my headquarters. A naturalist cannot travel hither and thither like an ordinary tourist; he must establish himself somewhere, and make excursions into the surrounding country, which he must investigate thoroughly or he can hope for no results from his labours; moreover, the paraphernalia of his profession are too bulky to be moved easily from place to place.

Unfortunately all the guide books were too incomplete to give me the least assistance; I had recourse to the admirable maps of the Austrian Government, and in them I found a small town—Luttach—which seemed well fitted for my purpose. It is situated in a deep valley in the midst of the Carpathians, at the foot of a long spur of Mt. Nanos on the road from Adelsberg to Görz—a road once much travelled, but fallen into disrepair since the intrusion of the railroad. From Luttach the topmost peak of Mt. Nanos could

be reached in a few hours, and in the valley itself there was sure to be a mingling of the southern fauna and flora with those of the Alps proper. I might promise myself rich additions to my collections. Moreover the many German names of the surrounding villages, and indeed the German name of the town itself, were very attractive for me, giving me hopes that there might be German elements mingling with the Slavonic civilization.

Luttach it should be then. My two huge travelling trunks were duly packed and I was provided with every requisite for collecting. The last of April I left Berlin full of pleasant anticipations.

In Vienna, where I stopped for a day as I passed through, I called on a friend; he gravely shook his head when he heard that I had chosen Luttach for a stay of some weeks. "I never heard before of this God-forsaken hole," said he; "I should not risk going there, but since you are determined to go, provide yourself at least with a good revolver, for without it you never ought to venture among the dreary deserts of the Car-

pathians, or to wander in those primeval woods and forests. It is dangerous for an elderly man like yourself. You know besides that there are still bears and wildcats in the forest on Mt. Nanos, not to mention those two venomous reptiles native to the rocky retreats of the Karst range—the cross-adder and the sand-viper. More to be feared than all these, moreover, is the human beast of prey whom you will surely meet in your wanderings there. You had really best relinquish your plan of visiting so inhospitable a region. But if you insist upon it, pray be cautious. Go well armed, and do not venture too far among those desert fastnesses.”

I cannot say that I was agreeably impressed by my friend's warning. I was not formed in an heroic mould and I do not willingly court danger. At sixty, after a life spent principally in study, there is small desire for perilous adventure. Although I am not deficient in personal bravery, as I had opportunity to prove in my student-days, and afterwards in political embroglios, it is not my nature to seek for perils. Bears and wildcats, and even venomous serpents, caused me

no alarm—the beasts are rarely dangerous in summer, and I knew well how to manage the reptiles; I had frequently encountered them in my excursions in the Swiss Alps and even in Northern Germany. The danger from human beasts of prey appeared to me far more serious, but even this could not deter me from carrying out the plan I had contemplated for so long. In Vienna I purchased an excellent revolver with the necessary ammunition and started the next morning for Görz, where I wished to visit an old friend and fellow-student, who, dwelling so near the frontier, would, I hoped, give me a less alarming account of the country I wished to explore. But my hope was vain; he was even more emphatic than my Vienna friend had been, although he laughed at the story of bears, wildcats, and snakes. He shook his head and said: “I know nothing of Luttach and the surrounding country, except that on Nanos the *Saturnia cecigena* was formerly to be found. You will probably make some good additions to your collections, although I doubt your making as many as you hope, since in the rocky parts of the mountains insect life is

sparse, and where the mountain sides are clothed with trees, they form an impenetrable primeval forest. I doubt also whether the richest harvest you can reap will compensate you for the hardships, the discomforts—yes, the dangers to which you will expose yourself. The greatest of these lies in the fact of your being a German. The unhappy strife between nationalities in Ukraine has so embittered the inhabitants there that all kindly feeling is extinct. The Slav considers hatred of the German his first duty; it is his greatest delight to annoy—even to maltreat—a German. Whether you can defend yourself with your revolver from such maltreatment is more than doubtful. You could not use it against any single peasant who should meet you in the forest, and insult you, or even against three or four, who might amuse themselves by annoying you in countless ways. There certainly is danger of encountering robbers in those wilds; your revolver might serve you there—to me danger from the determined hostility towards Germans seems far greater.”

This was encouraging! I almost wonder

now that I was not deterred from my undertaking. If my respected colleague had not expressly stated that I should find *Saturnia cæcigena* on Mt. Nanos, I should probably have followed his advice not to go to Luttach, but my passion for collecting outweighed every other consideration. I refused to be intimidated, and started upon my journey the very next day, arriving at four o'clock in the afternoon at Adelsberg, whence I could reach Luttach in four hours by a carriage road. So desirous was I to attain this goal of my wishes that I resisted the temptation to visit the world-renowned Grotto at Adelsberg, postponing this pleasure until my return. I hired a vehicle, large enough to accommodate myself and my two huge travelling trunks, and in half an hour I was on my way to Luttach.

The road was excellent, leading through an attractive mountain region among low hills, although loftier eminences bounded the horizon. I should have liked to know the names of those giant mountains, but my driver was a genuine Slav, who could not understand a word of German, and who was too stupid to

comprehend signs, so all intercourse with him was impossible. We drove swiftly, almost as swiftly up-hill as down-hill, through a charmingly varied landscape, through forests, past meadows and cornfields, with only a glimpse of the desolate Karst range now and then in the distance, until we rapidly approached the bare gray rocks of Mt. Nanos—which, as we descended by a winding road to the valley of Luttach, stood out boldly against the sky.

Time passed rapidly during the long drive; there was so much to see, and everything that I saw was distinctly in contrast with what I had been led to expect in Southern Ukraine. The numerous villages through which the road ran were entirely different from the ruinous Polish hamlets with which I was familiar in Upper Silesia; they consisted mostly of flourishing farms, with very few straw-thatched cottages. The peasants whom we met greeted me as we passed along with friendly courtesy—they could not recognize me as a hated German—and the inns as we drove by them, so far from presenting pictures of dirt and decay, were most attractive, and invitingly clean.

And when in the valley we drove among meadows bright with the luxuriant growth of spring—past vineyards where each vine showed careful culture and was just putting forth its tender leaves—along a road bordered on the left by hillsides under full cultivation, where countless white cottages in the midst of blossoming orchards betokened a numerous population, I could hardly fancy that I was in the midst of the ill-reputed desolate Karst range, in a corner of the world of which scarce a hint was to be found in the guide books. The bald rocky mass of Mt. Nanos alone, clothed at its feet only with a forest of oaks, and the bare peaks of the high range that seemed to close in the valley in the distant west, showed that vegetation was not as luxuriant everywhere in the Karst range as I found it on the hills to the left and in the valley itself.

“Luttava!” my driver called out, nodding to me and pointing with his whip towards a little town near at hand, nestling at the very foot of Nanos, its white houses seeming to cling to the rocks. In a few minutes we had reached it, and after driving along a street

too narrow for more than one vehicle, turned into the gateway of a large building, before which a tall pole supported a sign whereon a golden grape vine declared it to be the inn recommended to me before I left Adelsberg.

The carriage stopped beneath the dim gateway before a door opening directly into a spacious kitchen, where in the huge chimney-piece a bright fire was blazing. Through the door I could see several men, some standing, some seated upon low benches, about the fire, all of whom regarded the newcomer with curiosity. A plainly clad but spotlessly clean dame busied herself on the hearth, moved a steaming pot to one side, and hurried out to receive me, opening the carriage door to help me to alight.

"Can I have a room?"

"Certainly! If the gentleman will kindly go upstairs," was the reply, delivered in excellent German, although with a strong accent. "Mizka, show the gentleman up to Number Two."

Mizka, a pretty slender girl, tripped lightly before me up the stairs leading up two flights directly from the kitchen to a wide entry,

where she threw open the door of Number Two, and courteously held it open for me to precede her.

The room was large, low, and square, with two small windows, looking out upon the street. It probably looked larger than it really was from the absence of much furniture along its walls. Between the two windows there was an old-fashioned sofa covered with gay chintz, and above its high back hung an oval mirror in a black varnished frame, while before it stood an extension table, which if pulled out to its fullest capacity would have accommodated twenty-four persons. A tall cedar clothes press, a washstand, six chintz-covered cushioned chairs, and a huge bed which had to be clambered into by the help of a chair, completed the furniture of the room. The walls, painted light green, were adorned with four gaily colored prints, each portraying a quarter of the earth in the guise of a very ugly and scantily clothed dame, whose distorted limbs reclined upon a fantastically shaped couch.

This was Number Two, my room. It certainly did not look inviting for a long stay; it

was too bare, but it as certainly possessed the unexpected attraction of perfect cleanliness. Not a speck of dust lay upon the few articles of furniture, the bare floor was spotless, and the creases in the white bed linen bore testimony to its freshness.

"Will the gentleman take his supper here, or below in the dining-room?" Mizka asked me in very good German.

"I will come down as soon as I have washed," was my reply.

"I will bring fresh water immediately;" and she hurried away, returning presently with a can of crystal-clear water, and a supply of fresh towels, and followed closely by two gigantic porters, each of whom bore upon his shoulders one of my heavy trunks. Assuredly thus far I could not complain of lack of promptitude in the service of a Slav inn.

When I had freed myself from the dust of travel, and had changed my coat, I went down to the dining-room; the way led through the kitchen, where several men were sitting or standing around the hearth, talking familiarly with the hostess, who was busy mean-

while with her cooking. All greeted me politely as I passed through the room.

When Mizka showed me into the spacious dining-room, I took it all in with a rapid glance. Its arrangement could not be called elegant, but the cleanliness of the scoured tables atoned for its simplicity. There were but a few persons present. At a table near a window a young man sat alone, apparently absorbed in a newspaper. He looked up for a moment as I entered, disclosing a singularly handsome face, which was immediately hidden behind his paper. The face was thoroughly German. Such deep blue eyes, such fair, close curls are to be found nowhere save in Germany. He was certainly handsome, but his expression was too grave, perhaps even too stern and hard to allow of his being thoroughly attractive.

As far from this young man as the size of the room would permit, at a large round table near the tall stove, sat six or eight men, smoking long cigars, with glasses of wine before them. They evidently saw me enter and look about for a seat, and one of them instantly rose and motioned courteously with

his hand, placing a chair at the table, while the others moved aside to give it room.

I was amazed at so polite a reception in this notoriously hostile Slav country, and I was not quite pleased. I should have liked to observe the magnates of Luttach, who were apparently here assembled, from a distance, at my leisure, before making their acquaintance, whereas now, when I accepted their invitation, and introduced myself as a German, a Prussian, and worse than all, from Berlin, whose citizens are never popular, their amiability might decrease. "Permit me to present myself to you, gentlemen," I said, "as Professor Dollnitz from Berlin, who hopes to spend some weeks with you here in your beautiful country, collecting plants and butterflies, beetles and chrysalids. I am an old naturalist who looks forward to much gratification here in your richly endowed Southern Ukraine."

I observed a fleeting smile pass around the circle upon hearing that I, so old a man, was running after butterflies and beetles, but I am used to that; all sensible men regard us old entomologists as cranks, and sometimes

jest rather rudely at our expense; but this was not the case here; the gentlemen, as I could see, suppressed their smiles at my butterfly mania; they rose very politely and formally introduced themselves as the District Judge Foligno, his Assistant Herr Einern, Burgomaster Pollenz, a retired Captain Pollenz, a landed proprietor, Gunther by name, Herr Weber, a merchant, and Herr Dietrich, a notary. Strange! All German names save that of the district judge.

Chance had surely brought me among Germans. I was strengthened in this belief by finding that they all spoke excellent German, not merely with me, but among themselves; only now and then was there heard a brief remark in Slavonic. I soon found out my mistake, however, when in the course of conversation I mentioned that I had been warned in Vienna and in Görz not to visit the Ukraine on account of the hostility of the Slavs to Germans. The Burgomaster Pollenz, a reverend old man, made reply, speaking with emphasis, and so loudly that even the young man sitting by the window at the other end of the room could hear every word distinctly:

"That is unfortunately a widespread error which has brought our good Ukraine into ill-repute. We are all Slavs, and are proud of being so. Our ancestors were Germans, but we are not. The Ukraine is our home. Whoever is born here and lives here must feel himself a genuine Slav. Those only do we hate among us who are disloyal sons of their native land, who would rob us of our language, our customs, and make Germans of us; we have no hatred for Germans born. There are none of them dwelling among us; our entire population is Slavonic, and you will soon find that as a native-born German you will be kindly received everywhere. It is not so in Laibach, or where, as there, the population is mixed, and national prejudice has free sway, causing constant strife, but even there the Slavs are seldom the aggressive party."

"Then you think I can chase my butterflies alone among your woods and mountains without fear of insult? I was expressly warned in Vienna not to leave the house here without a loaded revolver in my pocket to protect me from robbers."

I was answered by a burst of laughter. "I assure you there is no tract of country in the realm of Austria as perfectly safe as ours," the Burgomaster replied. "We have had no robbery here for many years and I will guarantee you as a German against any insult, unless, indeed," he raised his voice again, and spoke very loud, "you should consort with the only Slav among us who is disloyal to his country; friendship with him would cause you to be suspected of hostility to our nation."

The young man by the window had hitherto seemed heedless of our conversation; now he arose and approached us. His flashing eyes seemed to defy each member of the circle, but their expression grew gentler as he addressed the Burgomaster. "I cannot be angry with you, Herr Burgomaster," he said gravely, but not unkindly. "Your words were offensive, but I know that you mean well by me and by the strange gentleman. You have called me a disloyal son of my country, which I am not! I am a whole-souled Austrian, but one also who can never forget that he is sprung from German and Austrian

blood. You have all of you forgotten this; I am true to the German tongue and to German customs. You are the faithless ones, not I!"

"Do you want to pick a quarrel with us all, Franz?" asked the Burgomaster, regarding the young man disapprovingly.

"No, but I cannot allow you to give the strange gentleman a false idea of me. Moreover, you need not fear that I shall force my friendship upon him. I know too well that it might cause him annoyance. Good-night!" He turned upon his heel and left the room without bestowing a further glance upon the company.

When the door had closed behind him, the District Judge said: "Franz Schorn always was and always will be a most disagreeable fellow. He deserves a thrashing for his insolence in calling us all faithless."

"Your cane is just beside you in the corner; why did you not use it?" the Captain asked with a sneer. "In fact, Franz is not altogether wrong. My brother irritated him unnecessarily; he would never have forced his company upon the Herr Professor. He

lives so quietly and is so reserved that he cannot be accused of officiousness."

" 'Tis natural that you should espouse the cause of your future cousin," remarked the District Judge with a contemptuous emphasis upon the word "cousin."

"I should be glad to have him for my cousin; he is a thoroughly brave, honest fellow."

"But a German."

"I am half German myself, and at all events I should prefer a German to an Italian cousin. The Italians are always squinting over at Italy, and Franz is, as he says, a German-Austrian at least."

"Leave off bickering," the Burgomaster admonished his brother. "What will the Herr Professor think of us, if we quarrel so before him over our wine?"

During this short skirmish of words I took occasion to observe the two antagonists narrowly. I liked the Captain's frank, manly face and bearing, but the District Judge Foligno produced a very unpleasant impression upon me. He was a man of about forty, with a worn, sallow countenance. His features

were regular; he might have been accounted handsome but for some ugly lines about his mouth, half hidden though they were by a glossy black moustache, and a false, unsteady expression in his piercing black eyes. Before his war of words with the Captain he had taken no part in the conversation, but had sat gloomily silent, with downcast eyes, smoking his long cigar and drinking far more than the others. In the short time that I had been present Mizka had twice filled his tall glass.

The Burgomaster's efforts to restore peace were unavailing; the District Judge renewed the quarrel by a malicious remark about old army officers who no longer knew what nation they belonged to. The Captain retorted angrily, more bitter words ensued, the other gentlemen presently took part in the dispute, which principally concerned the character of young Franz Schorn. The Burgomaster alone was silent; of the rest only the County Clerk, Herr Einern, sided with the Captain. While the others all agreed with the District Judge's abuse of Franz Schorn as a rough, arrogant fellow, a recreant Slav, who was detested and despised all through the countryside, and were

unanimous in declaring that "old Pollenz" was perfectly right in forbidding Franz to hang around the Lonely House watching for pretty Anna, that it was the old man's patriotic duty to shield his charming daughter from Schorn's advances, the Clerk and the Captain warmly espoused his cause. The Clerk, in fact, did not mince matters, but frankly characterized as exaggerated and unjust his chief's tirade against Franz. The boldness that he showed in doing this without in the least overstepping the bounds of civility impressed me very favourably.

I was soon tired, however, of listening to a discussion which became more and more heated as time went on, concerning people of whom I had no knowledge, and therefore when I had finished my supper—an excellent one, by the way—and had emptied my glass of wine, I rose to retire, pleading fatigue from my journey.

The gentlemen probably suspected that their quarrel had driven me away, and they fell silent in some confusion while the Burgomaster said kindly: "You have chanced upon an unfortunate evening, Herr Professor. Do

not suppose that such a disturbance is frequent in our little circle, and I pray you pardon any harsh words you may have heard with regard to Germans. I can assure you that we have no quarrel with any Germans, save those who should be Slavs. That we have no dislike for Germans or Germany you may see for yourself, since you hear us all speak your language among ourselves, and pray do not let this evening's experience prevent you from joining our circle in future. You will always be an honoured and welcome guest."

I pressed the good man's hand cordially and followed Mizka, who stood with lighted candle ready to show me to my room.

I thought it not indiscreet to gossip a little with pretty Mizka while she was arranging my bed, and to learn from her something regarding the gentlemen whose acquaintance I had made below, and with whom I should probably have daily intercourse during some weeks to come. I could not have sought information from a better source.

Mizka had been born in Luttach; she knew all about every inhabitant of the town, and

she felt highly honored by "the gentleman's" desire to converse with her. In her gratitude she detailed all that I wished to know. I learned that the Burgomaster, Herr Pollenz, was the owner of the "Golden Grapevine," which Mizka's aunt, Frau Franzka, or rather, her husband, rented from him; he was now a guest in his own house, occupying with his brother, a pensioned captain, the entire second story.

Mizka was eloquent in praise of the two brothers, whom she described as the best and truest of men. No one could be as thoroughly kind as the Burgomaster; he was, in fact, too kind, for he was sometimes really pinched for money himself, because he could not refuse to give or to lend to the poor, and there were evil-disposed people who abused his benevolence. He was very wise, too, and learned. Whoever in all Luttach stood in need of good counsel could be sure of finding it from the Burgomaster. He and the Captain were much respected, not only in Luttach, but throughout the countryside.

Mizka gave unstinted praise also to the County Clerk, Herr von Einern, for whom

every one in Luttach had a good word, regretting that he was not District Judge and Foligno the Clerk; he was too young for a Judge as yet, but he was sure of promotion, for he belonged to a very old Luttach family—his father was a general—although he never prided himself upon his position, but was kind and courteous to the very poorest, whereas the Judge was often rude and harsh to poor people in court.

Mizka had nothing pleasant to say of the Judge. He was out-and-out Italian although his grandfather had settled in Luttach and he himself could not speak Italian fluently; but an Italian was always an Italian; he never could be a true Slav. Yet he was not temperate, like most Italians; he drank too much, and was not content with the good Luttach wine, but always wanted some special kind for himself. That was why he was always needing money. Eighteen hundred gulden was a good salary; many a Judge could live comfortably upon it with a wife and children, whereas he, though a bachelor, was always in debt. He already owed Frau Franzka nearly five hundred gulden, and Mizka could not

understand why her aunt would go on lending to him. He had the best two rooms in the upper story—Number Twelve, just above the Herr Professor's Number Two, and Number Thirteen—but he had paid nothing for them for a year, and yet he behaved as if he was the greatest guest in the house; nothing was good enough for him. He often drove to Görz, where he consorted with the officers, and 'twas said that he had sometimes lost at play more than a hundred gulden in one evening. He had long since squandered all the property he inherited from his father; he had a house in Luttach, but not a stone of it really belonged to him; he had mortgaged it all to the wealthy old Pollenz, the Burgomaster's cousin, and whoever got into the clutches of that old man never got free until he had lost his last penny; for old Pollenz, who lived in the last house on the mountainside—it was called "the Lonely House"—was a hard-hearted usurer.

Old Pollenz now owned forests, vineyards, meadows, and farmlands, for which he exacted the highest rents; all his money had been made by usury, and woe to the peasant

to whom he had lent any—he was sure to be obliged to sell all that he possessed to satisfy his creditor's demands. The man was a hateful old miser; in spite of his wealth he hardly dared to eat, and never entered an inn to drink a glass of good wine. He lived with his daughter, pretty Anna, and an old servant maid, apart from everybody, in the Lonely House; its windows barred with iron, because he was constantly in dread of robbers, although there had never been a robbery or burglary in all the countryside within the memory of man. But the old fellow was so afraid of thieves that he would let no one enter the house whom he did not know well, and he always went armed with a couple of pistols and a big knife.

He was most afraid of Franz Schorn, and had often said of him: "If he should meet me alone, he'd be sure to do me a mischief, but I'll be even with him. I'll shoot him like a mad dog sooner than let him attack me." The old man's dread in this case was not quite without cause, for Franz was a rough fellow, who might well assault a mortal enemy, and the two had been mortal enemies ever since

two years before, when old Pollenz drove Franz from his door with curses.

The old man was a bitter foe of the Germans, and had fallen into a terrible rage when some one had told him that Franz was sneaking around his house courting pretty Anna. And so, when one day Franz did not sneak around the house, but boldly entered it and asked for pretty Anna for his wife, the old man became almost insane with fury; he drove the young fellow out of doors with blows and curses, although Anna wept and entreated, saying that she would rather die than give up her Franz.

Just at that time the Judge, who certainly had need of a rich wife, asked old Pollenz to take him for his son-in-law. The old miser said "yes," thinking to make an end of pretty Anna's love affair with Franz. He told his daughter that she must marry the Judge, but Anna refused. To all her father's threats she answered, "I'd rather die! You may drag me to the altar, but you cannot compel me to utter a 'yes'!" And so the Judge got the mitten in spite of the father's consent. Ever since then he had been a deadly enemy to

Franz Schorn; every child knew how he had got the mitten in the Lonely House; he had often been teased about it, and the malicious Italian would never forgive Franz Schorn because of it.

Such, in brief, was the sum of Mizka's information; she would gladly have talked on, but I was afraid she might be wanted in the room below, so I dismissed her with a "Good-night."

I admit that she had interested me much with her gossip. I now understood many words and phrases that had escaped the gentlemen below in the heat of their quarrel, and I perfectly comprehended the bitterness of the Judge's hostility to Franz Schorn. A love story in a Slav village! But what did it all matter to me? What possible interest could an old naturalist, sixty years of age, take in the love affairs of a young fellow whom he did not know, and the disappointment and lack of money of a very disagreeable District Judge? There was absolutely no reason why I should mix myself up with such matters, or even bestow a thought upon them. That was not why I was in Luttach,

but for the purpose of collecting plants, but terflies, and beetles, which I resolved to begin to do the next morning, oblivious of all love affairs, German or Slav.

I undressed, mounted a chair and made a bold leap which landed me in the midst of the maize straw with which the bed had been stuffed. It was not a luxurious couch, but fatigue sleeps well even upon a poor one. I had scarcely extinguished the candle on the table beside my bed when I fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER II.

THE PROFESSOR'S FIRST EXCURSION.

THE sun shining brightly into my room awoke me about five o'clock. I got up, dressed myself quickly, and went down to the kitchen, where Mizka had already kindled a bright fire on the hearth. She assured me that my coffee would be ready in a quarter of an hour and that she would bring it out to me in the garden. There I met the Captain, who, enjoying his morning pipe, was walking to and fro between the flower beds. Now and then he would stop before an opening rose, regarding it with eyes really full of affection. He greeted me cordially.

"You are an early riser, Herr Professor," he said with a smile. "I thought all those who lived in large cities never rose before eight o'clock, but I am glad that you are an exception, for the mornings and evenings with us are the most delightful time of the day. At noon the sun is far too hot and glowing to enable us to enjoy the beauty that

lies about us here. Only look at these rose-buds, how beautiful they are, each one with a diamond dewdrop in its breast! Are they not enchantingly lovely?"

He chattered on, pointing out to me every blossom that delighted him, and taking positive joy in all. He conducted me through the garden, which was not very large, and at the end of it he unlatched a gate that was not locked.

"Now I must show you the only thing perhaps that we have worth showing in Luttach. Pray follow me," and he walked before me through the open garden gate. After a few steps we reached the banks of a broad, brawling brook, which seemed in all its breadth and force to come directly from out the rocky wall before us. The rock must certainly have been thoroughly undermined. From countless smaller and larger openings the crystal-clear water streamed with such power that the numerous jets instantly formed a broad deep brook.

"This is the Luttach. On the north side of Nanos the raging Voyna rushes through a savage rocky vale, suddenly vanishing with-

out a trace; the mountain engulfs it. They say that the Voyna in the interior of Nanos forms a deep unfathomable lake and from this lake in the interior of the mountain it flows on, breaking through the rocks, to come to light again here as the Luttach brook. This may be possible, for Nanos, like the whole Karst range, is absolutely riddled with caves. The famous Adelsberg Grotto would not be the unparalleled wonder that it is, if our population were not too indolent to explore the hollow openings and grottoes in our side of the mountain. Why, in the immediate neighbourhood of Luttach there are two caves, the depth of which is known to none, for no one has ever taken the trouble to explore them, except for a few yards."

"What absolutely unconscionable neglect!" I rejoined. "If you could succeed in finding here a spring, a mineral spring as wonderful with its grottoes as that of Adelsberg, think of how it would attract travellers and what a goal it would be for all tourists."

The Captain shrugged his shoulders. "I really do not know whether our Luttach population would desire this. They certainly feel

no wish for it at present. Besides, it is questionable if our grottoes are really very large in extent, and it is probable that their exploration would be attended with some difficulty and perhaps indeed danger. I have never thought of making an attempt to explore one or the other of these, but, if you desire to do so, Herr Professor, I shall be very glad to accompany you."

I joyfully accepted the Captain's offer. Under all circumstances the exploration of a cave, hitherto unknown, possesses for me extraordinary interest; in the depths of these caves in the Karst range are found rare cave beetles, the species is confined entirely to such places. It might well be possible to discover in the Luttach grotto a species hitherto unknown. Such a prospect made me forget the threatened difficulty and danger.

The Captain smiled when he heard the reason for my interest. That a human being should be ready to subject himself to inconvenience and even to danger that he might discover a new beetle appeared to him extremely ridiculous, but he was too polite to make this evident. He promised to look about for some

strong, courageous men, who, armed with torches, ladders, and ropes, should accompany us into the caves.

"I hope," he said, "that you will reap a rich harvest of rare cave beetles, but even if you do not succeed you will be abundantly repaid by the beetles and butterflies which you will find on the slopes of Nanos. A naturalist from Vienna, who was here about ten years ago and spent six weeks in Luttach, was thoroughly enraptured by the richness of his discoveries. I was then at home on leave and frequently talked with him. His best and rarest caterpillars he found near the Chapel of St. Nikolas, I believe, upon the leaves of beeches and oaks."

Here was an important piece of news! The caterpillars of the *Saturnia cecigena*, the rare Dalmatian butterfly which had lured me to Luttach, lived upon beech and oak leaves. I immediately determined to seek the neighbourhood of the Chapel of St. Nikolas this very day. To St. Nikolas my first excursion should be made.

I asked the Captain the way thither. "You cannot miss it," he answered; "there are two

paths, each very easy to find. The first, which is perhaps fifteen minutes the nearer, is steep in its beginning, and even dangerous for unaccustomed mountain climbers. Part of it you can see from here. It begins there at that elder bush and leads directly up the rocks by steps partly natural and partly artificial, most of them, however, giving space only for one foot. A false step, a slip, might be disastrous, therefore I can hardly advise you to take this nearer path over the rocks. It is not long; in five minutes you would reach a very pleasant, gently ascending footpath, which in fifteen minutes more would lead you past the Lonely House, to reach in another quarter of an hour the Chapel of St. Nikolas in a direct line. The second path, just as easy to find, is very charming, beginning at the last house of Luttach and leading to the left from the road to Adelsberg, winding through meadows and through oak forests, and ascending gently, past the scattered houses of the village of Oberberg. After perhaps half an hour you reach a large crucifix at a fork of the pathway. The path to the left leads to the Lonely House, that to the right

directly to the Chapel of St. Nikolas without going near the Lonely House; you cannot miss it. I advise you to take the longer path. The shorter is seldom used even by the inhabitants of Luttach, because it is certainly dangerous in descending. The District Judge alone, who is very fond of flowers, often climbs up the steep rocks, in search of rare, beautiful plants."

The advice was well meant, and I determined to follow it, although the mention of the rare and beautiful plants allured me. Still, I do not willingly expose myself to danger. We returned to the garden, where our coffee awaited us in a pretty arbour covered with wild grapevine.

I hurried my breakfast, for I was burning with impatience to find near St. Nikolas my entomological treasures. Scarcely a quarter of an hour had passed before I started on my way thither, supplied with a cane and a large umbrella, my tin box upon my back, my pockets filled with glasses for beetles and boxes for caterpillars and butterflies.

The Captain had described the path to me so exactly that I really could not miss it. He

had called it charming, but it was more than that. It was wondrously beautiful. It was a joy to ascend the mountain quietly, while fresh beauties of the landscape revealed themselves at every step. At my feet lay the pretty little town of Luttach, framed in emerald green meadows, bounded by the steep rocky wall against which it leaned. On the summit of this bare rock, majestically enthroned, were the remains of a ruined old castle, whose knightly possessor had in former times probably ruled over the rich valley of the Luttach.

Wherever the eye turned, whether downward to the houses and cottages in the valley, surrounded with blooming orchards, or to the distant view where the mighty mountain range bounded the horizon, its rocky peaks glowing in the sunlight—everywhere, it filled me with rapture.

And then, the fresh, delicious morning! It was a joy indeed to wander thus in the mountains.

The crucifix on the path was very quickly reached. I turned to the right, and soon the little Church of St. Nikolas lay before me.

Hitherto I had sturdily strode on without being detained by my desire to collect. But now, when the goal of my wanderings was reached, I began to search. Once more I turned on the steps of the church to feast upon the wonderful view above the tops of the oaks growing in the valley below, and then I began my work. I could have scarcely found a piece of ground more adapted for my purpose than this around St. Nikolas. The church lay in the midst of a forest of tall oaks; around them there was a rich undergrowth, and where their trunks were more rare, there spread a carpet of charming wild-flowers, above which countless butterflies fluttered from one blossom to another. The wood above the chapel consisted partly of ancient trees and shrubbery, climbing the gentle slope of Nanos until it reached the bald rock which showed no trace of vegetation.

My first attempts at collection were rewarded by an astonishing result. I found upon the leaves of an oak a caterpillar entirely unknown to me. When I examined it more closely, it recalled to me the description

which I had seen of the *Saturnia cæcigena*. My dearest wish was fulfilled.

Only a naturalist can form an idea of my joyful emotion, my delight, and the passion for collecting which this first specimen aroused in me. I forgot everything: the beauty of the landscape, to which I now paid no attention; the difficulty of finding my way in the forest without a guide, the danger of treading upon one of the poisonous reptiles native to the Karst range—in short, I wandered about animated only by the desire to procure more specimens of this rare and beautiful insect, and the more I found, the more the desire increased. I never noticed that hours had passed, that the refreshing morning had given place to an intensely hot noon, and that the exertion of climbing and searching had caused the perspiration to stream from my forehead. But at last my sixty years asserted their right. I began to be tired and to feel very thirsty, as the sound of church bells ascended from the valley. I looked at my watch; twelve o'clock! More than six hours had I passed in unbroken labour, and surely a man of sixty had the

right to be a little tired and to think of home, especially since all my boxes were well filled.

I found myself in a dense forest at a considerable height above the little Church of St. Nikolas, but whether to the right or to the left of it I could not say, since I had walked along searching here and there, without a thought of the direction in which I was going. I might have informed myself as to this if I could have obtained a view of the valley, but the tall undergrowth made this impossible. There was nothing for it but to walk in the direction of Luttach, keeping to the right, down the mountain, and endeavouring to avoid any precipices, hoping thus to find the path in a roundabout way.

If it were not so oppressively hot! The oaks, covered with the early foliage of spring, hardly afforded any depth of shade. They could not protect me from the burning rays of the midday sun. The thirst which tormented me grew more intense with every minute, and almost intolerable. I longed for one swallow of water. Surely I could not be far from some cottage. Fortunately, in the morning the Captain had taught me the most im-

portant word in the Slavonic tongue, *woda*, "water." This word formed my entire Slavonic vocabulary, but it would suffice to inform any Slav of my need.

I strode on sturdily, keeping to the right down the mountain, and by good fortune encountered no precipice. After a little more than a quarter of an hour, I struck a footpath which wound about gently in the direction of Luttach. I pursued it, and I had proceeded but a few steps when in a little turn of the way I perceived a solitary pedestrian coming towards me. I immediately recognized the young man about whom there had been so lively a discussion in the Golden Grapevine, Franz Schorn. He was ascending the mountain path slowly, with eyes fixed gloomily on the ground. He did not see me until, when I was scarcely thirty steps from him, he suddenly raised his head as if listening. Then he started violently upon perceiving me. For a moment he seemed undetermined as to what he should do. He paused, regarded me darkly, then turned away, without a greeting, and in a moment more had vanished in the thick undergrowth of the forest.

A very strange fellow! He need not have considered himself so strictly bound by his promise not to press his friendship upon me. He need not have grudged me a kindly greeting and a word or two. I should have liked to ask him about the nearest cottage where I could perhaps get a drink of water, but there was no help for it; I could not run after him and must find my way for myself.

I pursued the footpath further. To my joy I soon found myself in the neighbourhood of a house, but as I approached it my joy turned to disappointment. All the windows—not only those of the ground floor, but those of the first story—were provided with strong iron bars, and I made sure that I had reached the *Lonely House*, whose possessor, old Polenz, according to all that I had heard of him, could hardly be expected to show any civility to a hated German. Should I ask him for a drink of water? It would not be pleasant to be rudely refused so modest a request. If I had not been tortured with thirst, I would rather have continued upon my path to Lut-tach instead of asking any favour of the old usurer; but he could at most only return me a

surly "No," so I determined to try it. On reaching the house, contrary to my expectation I found the front door wide open, although Mizka had told me that old Pollenz almost always kept it locked and would not open it until continued knocking had removed all suspicion of thieves.

Uncertain whether or not to enter, I stood before the open door; it looked into a spacious hall running through the entire house, ending in another door which probably led into the courtyard. That I confronted the Lonely House was made certain by the huge iron bolts with which the door towards the courtyard was secured. A steep staircase leading to the upper story led from one side of the hall. Opposite the staircase was a door; and two other doors, one to the right, one to the left of the entrance, led into the inner rooms of the house; they were all closed.

I entered and knocked modestly at the door on my left. No reply; no "Come in." I listened; there was not a sound to be heard; an uncanny stillness reigned throughout the house. I knocked again, more loudly, and then, after a pause, more loudly still for the

third time. The sound of my knocking was so loud that it surely must have been heard within, but it met with no response. I waited in vain.

A strange and uncomfortable sensation overcame me. I dreaded the Lonely House, where everything seemed dead. What folly! An old man should have more sense. I was ashamed of this strange and disagreeable sensation and turned towards the door on the right of the entrance. Perhaps my knock here might have a better result. No longer as modestly as before, I knocked loudly, and the door, which happened to be only ajar, opened slowly of itself. I cast one look into a spacious room, and staggered back, overcome by intense horror.

There, almost in the centre of the apartment, a motionless figure lay upon the floor in a pool of blood, which had stained the white boards dark red. Such horror, such intense dread, seized me that my first thought was of flight as swift as my feet could carry me from this terrible sight; but the next moment I was ashamed of such cowardly fear. Perhaps the unfortunate man who lay there in his blood

still lived. Perhaps I might help him. I overcame the paralyzing terror and entered the room.

All that I saw there only increased my horror. No mortal help could avail the unfortunate man whose stiffened corpse lay before me. He had either killed himself, or had been horribly murdered. His throat was cut, and from the gaping wound dark drops of blood were still trickling. The pale, bloodless, distorted countenance was that of a dead man.

Had there been a murder here? Had the old man's foreboding, always dwelling upon burglars and murderers, been fulfilled? Perhaps the murderer was still in the house. The horrible crime could not have been committed for long, for the blood had not yet congealed; some drops were still trickling from the wound.

Horror seized me afresh. I looked timidly about me. It seemed to me the murderer might be near. Hastily I drew from my breast pocket my loaded revolver; I was safe from any attack and could look about me with less agitation.

There was no doubt that a horrible crime had been committed here. There upon the floor, at some distance from the dead man, lay a bloody knife, near a large cabinet, the folding doors of which stood wide open. Several drawers had been drawn out and papers lay scattered upon the floor. The murderer had apparently been searching the cabinet for money or valuables, and had scattered about these papers.

Had he been startled by my knocking and escaped? If so, he must have passed through the door which led on the left to an adjoining room, for the windows here were barred.

I summoned all my courage to follow him, but there was no need, for the door leading outside was bolted and no one could have left the room by it. He must have escaped before I entered; he might be concealed somewhere near; but, again, he might have left the house, and, in his hasty flight, have forgotten to close the front door.

What should I do? Ought I not to search the place? Yet if he were not there, all search would be unavailing, and if I found him, it would be foolhardy to wander about these

unfamiliar rooms merely to expose myself to an attack. The murderer might deal a blow from behind which would make me and my revolver useless.

It suddenly occurred to me that old Pollenz did not live alone in the house; that he had a daughter. Where was she? And where was the old servant of whom Mizka had told me? They had not heard my knocking, and yet it had been loud enough to resound through the entire building. Had they, in their endeavour to escape from the murderer, concealed themselves? Or—oh, horrible thought!—had they also fallen victims to the monster? On this point I must have certainty. If the assassin were still in the house, I could not leave the two women unprotected. My cowardly fear must be overcome; I must pursue the wretch. Humanity made my duty clear. With my revolver held ready and with a beating heart, I turned back to the bolted door, which I opened easily. I entered a spacious, dreary room. A bed against the wall, a table, a couple of wooden chairs, and two large closed wardrobes formed its entire furniture. Evidently it was the old man's sleeping room—a sordid

apartment. Here I found nobody, and I continued my search. A second door in the room was unlocked. Through it I again entered the hall. Beneath the staircase was a door which evidently led to the cellar; it was closed by a massive bolt. Two other doors led from the hall to rooms on the left. I went to the first of these—the one at which I had knocked so loudly—opened it, and entered a large apartment much better furnished than the rooms which I had hitherto explored. It gave an impression of more comfort, and I was struck by its great cleanliness. By the window there was a work-table, upon which lay some sewing. A couple of flowers blooming in earthen pots stood on the window sill. A bed with snowy curtains stood against the wall opposite the window.

Undoubtedly this was the sitting-room and bedchamber of the fair Anna, the daughter of the murdered man. Without delay I continued my search. A door opposite the bed was unlocked. Through it I entered the kitchen. Here also I found no one, and I returned to the hall.

The four rooms of the ground floor had now

been searched without result. With a calmer mind I mounted the steep staircase to the second story. Here I found rooms similar to those below. They were all unlocked and appeared to be used partly for old rubbish. In one of them there was a bed, probably that of the old servant.

I had found nothing. It seemed useless to ascend to the garret, so I went down to the room in which the murdered man lay, to consider what steps I should take next.

My fear lest the daughter and the maid had been the murderer's victims had proved groundless. Neither of them was in the house. The monster had probably profited by their absence to kill and rob the old man, whom he knew to be alone. Any longer stay in this terrible abode seemed useless. Of course I must inform the proper authorities of the murder, and it was my plain duty to do this as soon as possible. I ought not to linger longer in the Lonely House. Everything must be left lying as it was to await the legal investigation. I could do no good to the dead man by remaining. I ought to proceed to Luttach as quickly as my feet could carry me

to inform the District Judge of my terrible discovery. On, then, to Luttach and the District Judge! Suddenly, by a strange chain of ideas, the memory awoke in me of Franz Schorn as he was coming from the Lonely House, with eyes gloomily downcast, in the forest path; of how he started when he saw me before he fled away through the undergrowth. Franz Schorn came from the house of his mortal enemy. I shuddered. Had I met the murderer fresh from the cruel deed? Had not the old man who lay there in his blood always feared him? Had not Mizka yesterday evening told me that Franz was a rough, morose fellow, who might be readily suspected of taking the life of his mortal enemy?

This was a dreadful suspicion, but not without foundation; and, at all events, it seemed to be my duty to inform the Judge as quickly as possible of my meeting with Franz Schorn. I hastily left the scene of the crime, not casting another glance behind me. I breathed more freely when I emerged from the gloomy hall into the brilliant sunshine. No longer under the spell of the ghastly spectacle, I

could consider more calmly what was to be done. My first determination, however, remained unaltered. It was my plain duty to hasten to Luttach by the nearest way and there report to the District Judge. The nearest way, as the Captain had told me in the morning, was by the rocks. I could not miss it; I saw it clearly before me. A broad, well-worn path went directly from the Lonely House probably to the outlying cottages of the village of Oberberg. Another, narrow and overgrown, led in the direction of Luttach, and, at first, in a gentle incline down the mountain. This must be the footpath, then, which further on became the narrow way, over the rocks leading directly to the inn, which the Captain had described to me as perilous. Ought I to expose myself to the danger of a fall? The descent was more difficult than the ascent. The rocky way was at least the nearer by fifteen minutes. I had certainly climbed up and down more dangerous places among rocks in order to procure a rare caterpillar. I was now upon a far more important errand, and ought to reach Luttach quickly. It is foolish to expose oneself to unnecessary

danger, but the man who shuns it when something important is at stake is a miserable coward. I delayed no longer. One glance over my shoulder I cast. The door of the Lonely House was wide open. Any passer-by might enter. Surely it was wrong to leave it open for more than an hour without any guard. Could I lock it? The key might still be in the lock. I approached it once more, I confess with great reluctance. The silence as of the grave which reigned within filled me with horror, but I overcame this weakness. My expectation was confirmed; the large house key was still there. I locked the door, and taking the key could now pursue my way, sure that for the next hour no passer-by could enter. I hurried down the narrow way leading to the rocky abyss; it was a charming path. The view of the valley was enchanting; I had no eyes for it; I saw nothing of the wealth of rare mountain plants blooming on either side, nothing of the gorgeous peonies which now and then projected their red blossoms almost from the very rock. My thoughts still clung to the Lonely House and the gloomy room where lay the dead man. I en-

countered not a single human being as I hurried along. At length the little town lay directly below me. I must descend over the dangerous rocks. I looked about me searchingly; it was not easy to find the narrow, untrodden footway, but it soon became plain to my practised eye. Without hesitation I strode down from stone to stone, partly leaping, knowing that a false step would cost me my life; but my training among the mountains made my footing sure, and after a few minutes I stood at the garden gate of the inn.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROFESSOR'S RETURN.

"DINNER has been waiting for you ever so long, Herr Professor," called Frau Franzka to me as I entered the kitchen, but hardly had I approached her before she clasped her hands above her head with "Holy Virgin, how you look! How pale! How distressed, and how dripping with perspiration! Why, large drops are falling from your hair; no one can climb about the mountains in the hottest part of the day. The District Judge——"

"Is the District Judge at home?" I broke in.

"Yes; he came home about a quarter of an hour ago. I did not see him, but I heard him going upstairs. He is in his room and is probably dressing. The Herr Professor ought also to go to his room and dress. You will take cold in your damp clothes."

I scarcely heard the last words. I hurried up the three flights of stairs and in the pas-

sage looked about me for the door marked No. 12—the District Judge's sitting room. I knocked at the door; no answer. I knocked more loudly; there came from within, as from an adjoining room, "Who's there?"

"Professor Dollnitz. I must see you with regard to a matter of great importance, Herr Foligno."

"I pray you just wait for a few minutes. I am dressing, but I'll be ready immediately."

I had to wait. Whilst I stood motionless before the door I suddenly became conscious of the intolerable thirst which, more than half an hour before, had driven me to the Lonely House. During my great excitement I had not been conscious of any physical need, but now in the first moments of quiet it attacked me with double violence. I was perfectly exhausted—almost fainting. Fortunately on the table in the passage there stood a carafe half filled with water. It must have been there for hours; the water was lukewarm, but I drank it eagerly and it gave me the refreshment of which I stood in need. I was as one new born.

I had to wait at least five minutes. The

time seemed very long to me. At last the door opened and the District Judge appeared in a new and very elegant summer suit. His thin, sallow face had not attracted me on the previous evening, and now as he received me with a forced friendly smile I liked it still less.

“Forgive me for keeping you so long, Herr Professor,” he said, “but I could not open the door before; I was, to speak frankly, entirely undressed when you knocked. I was obliged to change my clothes because, in your interest, I have had quite a fatiguing walk on the mountain. I am a little of a botanist—only a layman—but I am interested in botany, and I was desirous to surprise the learned Herr Professor with some rare plants whose habitat I knew. It cost me an effort to obtain them, and even a little danger; I had a fall which gave me a slight wound in my hand, but it is very insignificant, scarcely worth mentioning, since I have procured what I desired. Here they are.” With his left hand (his right was wrapped in a white handkerchief) he took some orchids from the table before the sofa and handed them to me. They were of a

beautiful and rare species, and at any other time would have given me the keenest delight, but at this moment I scarcely looked at them.

"I must reserve my thanks for a time," I said gravely, "the terrible intelligence which I bring to you, Herr Foligno, as the foremost official in the town, will admit of no delay. I come directly from the Lonely House—the scene of a horrible murder and robbery."

The District Judge recoiled as from a sudden blow. Pallor as of death overspread his sallow face. His mouth twitched; his eyes became glazed and fixed on me with a look wherein gleamed downright fear and absolute dismay.

"You came from the Lonely House—a murder and robbery! Incredible!" he stammered. Terror so mastered him that he could scarcely utter these few words.

"What I tell you is only too true," I replied, and then in the fewest words I related what I had seen and how I had closed the open door and hurried to Luttach in order to make him, as the chief authority of the place, acquainted with the fearful crime.

During my short narrative he was struggling to regain his composure and succeeded. He listened with his gaze fixed gloomily upon the floor. When I finished, he cast upon me a searching, piercing glance, and his voice trembled as he said, "Did you find no trace of the murderer? Did you see no one in the neighbourhood of the Lonely House?"

On my way down the mountain it had been clear to me that it was my duty to report my meeting with Franz Schorn, but when the District Judge put this question to me, I suddenly felt a decided reluctance to inform him of it. This man was Schorn's mortal enemy. Ought I to make him a sharer of my suspicion, which had been aroused by nothing but a chance encounter?

Still more searching and still more penetrating was the glance the District Judge bestowed upon me as I hesitated to reply.

"Did you see no one in the neighbourhood of the house, or upon the path towards it?" he asked once more.

As Judge he had a right to put the question and I ought to tell him the truth. As I re-

flected thus, I overcame my reluctance and replied.

“I did encounter a man not far from the Lonely House in the forest, but I cannot think myself justified in suspecting him of evil.” I then described accurately my meeting with Franz Schorn.

He listened in silence, his eyes still fixed on the floor. When I finished, he said with emotion, extending his left hand to me: “I thank you, Herr Professor; your report may be of the first importance for the discovery of the murderer, but it may also subject an innocent man to a horrible suspicion. As long as there is no evidence against a man except that he was seen in the neighbourhood of the scene of a murder, nothing would justify his being suspected of what, even as a mere suspicion, might darken his whole future life. Therefore, let me request you to allow me to consider your account of your meeting with Herr Franz Schorn as a matter personal to myself and confidential, not official. I shall then not be forced to include it in a short account which I must write out of your information.”

“You surprise me, Herr Foligno.”

“I suppose so, and I owe you an explanation of my request. Herr Franz Schorn is my bitter enemy and I have never concealed my dislike of him. You were a witness yesterday evening of my quarrel with Captain Pollenz and my clerk. Precisely on this account I do not wish to include in my official paper a suspicion which I myself hold to be entirely groundless. I promise you that I will neglect nothing that will lead to the discovery of the murderer, that I will investigate every step which Herr Schorn has taken to-day, and will have him watched by a thoroughly competent detective. If he is guilty, I shall discover his guilt; but I do not believe he is so, and because I am his foe I will not attach any suspicion to him which, while the true murderer remains undiscovered, might ruin his life, merely because at the time of the murder he had been seen near the scene of the crime. Promise me, Herr Professor, that you will tell no one at present of your meeting with Franz Schorn. Should there be other and more important grounds for suspecting him, I shall request you to give me your account officially.”

I pressed the Judge's hand cordially, and joyfully gave him the promise for which he asked. How unjustly I had judged this man! How I had misunderstood him! I was ashamed of the reluctance I had felt to tell him of my meeting with Franz Schorn.

"I must now make out a short official account of your information," the District Judge continued. "You can hardly believe how difficult this is for me. Your account has agitated me so profoundly that I can scarcely control myself. I was very familiar with old Pollenz. He had indeed many disagreeable qualities. Toward others he was often hard and unyielding, but I never had anything to complain of in his behaviour to me. He has often shown me favours. He was indeed almost a friend, and now I must prepare a paper which shall show him to be the victim of a horrible crime, which I must take the first steps to investigate. It must be done. It is my duty. In spite of the pain which my right hand gives me in writing, I will do it immediately."

He took a sheet of paper; pens and ink were at hand, and seated himself on the sofa behind

the large table to write. His hand could not have been very painful, for it did not prevent his writing swiftly and clearly. Now and then, without interrupting his writing, he addressed some brief, leading question to me, and in scarcely ten minutes the paper was finished. He read it aloud to me. It was wonderfully concise and clear, without saying one word too much or too little, and I signed it without an alteration. After he had added his own signature, he said, "I must now beg you, Herr Professor, to accompany me to the Lonely House. I shall immediately summon my assistant, as well as the District Physician and the captain of gendarmes, to inspect the premises. You, too, Herr Professor, must be present. You must testify that nothing in the house has been altered in your absence. This is important for further investigation. Can I count upon you?"

"Most certainly."

"Then pray hold yourself in readiness. In half an hour, at the latest, I shall have notified the other gentlemen. The time of waiting, if I may advise you, should be employed by you in strengthening yourself with food

and drink. You may not feel the need of refreshment at present, but we have some sad hours before us."

How kind and thoughtful! I certainly had cause to ask pardon in my heart of the District Judge for the prejudice he had created.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INVESTIGATION.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when Herr Foligno called for me in the dining-room, where I was sitting with the Captain. It had taken him almost an hour to assemble those who were to inspect the scene of the murder in the Lonely House. I had informed the Captain, a near relative of the murdered man, of my terrible discovery, and he had been deeply moved. He said:

"I was never intimate with old Pollenz, although he was my first cousin. He was a hard usurer and a miser. He loved no one in the world save his daughter, but that his end has been so horrible is certainly very sad. Poor child, my dear little Anna! How will she bear this fearful shock! I saw her about twelve o'clock here in Luttach with her old maid, Johanna. She had been paying a visit to an aged aunt, and she is probably still there. I must see if it be so. I do not willingly visit the malicious old gossip, but if Anna

is still with her, I must go to prepare the poor child for the sad news that awaits her.”

He sent Mizka to old Frau Laucic's, and in a few minutes she returned to say that Fräulein Anna had been with the widow, but that she had left about a quarter of an hour before to make some purchases in the village and then to return home.

Upon hearing this, the Captain determined to accompany the officials to the Lonely House, for which he received permission from the District Judge.

Soon after four o'clock we began our walk; not by the steep rocky path, which was rather too difficult for the old District Physician, and might prove dangerous, but in accordance with the Judge's directions, by the longer way past the village of Oberberg.

We could make but slow progress, for the heat was still oppressive. The old physician gasped and panted as we ascended the mountain. The Judge with kindly consideration, begged him to walk slowly, although he himself was trembling with impatience to reach our goal.

We met various people on the way. They

greeted us politely and looked after us with surprise. Intelligence of the murder had not yet reached the village of Oberberg, and people could not imagine what so many persons, accompanied by the captain of gendarmes, could have to do in the little village. I walked first with the Captain. The Judge and his clerk followed, and, naturally, very little was said as we pursued our way; all were oppressed by a sense of what lay before them.

We had turned into the path by the crucifix leading on the left to the Lonely House, and were but a short distance from the spot to which we were tending, when the Captain suddenly stood still and said in a faltering voice, "There comes my poor little Anna."

She came towards us hurriedly from the Lonely House. She was called pretty Anna in the country round, and indeed she deserved the name. I have scarcely ever in my long life seen so beautiful a girl. Even her expression of intense anxiety could not distort her charming face. When she recognized the Captain she flew towards him.

"Oh, uncle, my dear kind uncle, thank God

you are here!" she cried. "I am dying with anxiety; my father will not open the door. For a quarter of an hour Johanna and I have been knocking in vain. Something must have happened to him, or he would hear us and open the door for us."

The Captain put his arm round the lovely child and pressed a kiss upon her white forehead. "My poor little girl!" he murmured. His voice failed him; he could say no more; his eyes filled with tears; he tried to control himself, but the compassion which he felt for the girl in his arms was too intense; it mastered him; he could hardly utter a word.

"Good heavens! What has happened?" cried Anna, extricating herself from the Captain's embrace and gazing at him, her large black eyes dilated with horror. "You call me your poor girl? There are tears in your eyes. For God's sake tell me what it means! Has anything happened to my father? Oh, answer me, uncle! I would rather hear the worst than suffer such suspense."

The Judge answered instead of the Captain, who could not control his voice. "Compose yourself, Fräulein Anna," he said with grave

kindliness, "you need all your courage, all your self-control to endure the misfortune which God has sent to you. Unfortunately your anxiety is justified. Something has indeed happened to your father, my lifelong friend."

"He is dead!" the girl cried, with what was almost a shriek; overcome with grief, she tottered and would have fallen to the ground if the Captain had not thrown his arms about her. The Judge took her hand with deep sympathy, but she snatched it away and pushed him from her with a gesture expressive of the most profound aversion.

"Do not touch me; I hate, I despise you!" she cried, as she cast herself again into the Captain's arms. "Uncle, my dear kind uncle, you tell me what has happened. I can hear the worst from you, but not from that man."

The Judge, thus rudely repulsed, was deeply offended, but was too magnanimous—his pity for the unfortunate girl was too profound to admit of his expressing his resentment by a harsh word.

"You do me bitter wrong, Fräulein Anna," he said gently. "I sympathize sincerely with

your pain, but I will not thrust my pity upon you. I pray you, Captain, to inform her as mercifully as possible of what has happened."

It was a hard task for the Captain, but it was his duty to fulfil it. He motioned to the Judge and to myself to withdraw for a few steps, and then took Anna's arm in his and, walking on before us, spoke to her in the most sympathetic and loving way. He told me afterwards that in all his life he had never had so hard a duty to perform. He searched in vain for kindly words to soften the horror; he feared that the delicate girl could hardly endure the frightful truth which he was forced to tell her; but to his great surprise Anna showed a remarkable degree of composure. She had not succumbed, he said, to pain and grief; she had become ghastly pale and her dark eyes had gleamed with a strange flickering fire, as, almost in a whisper, not to him, but to herself, she had murmured, "Foully murdered and robbed; murdered for the sake of his wretched money. He sacrificed his soul and now has given his life for money." She shed no tear; her grief was too

great, too heart-breaking; but she trembled violently; her little hand shook as it rested on her uncle's arm, and as he put his arm round her and tenderly drew her to him, he could feel the violent beating of her heart. He told her everything that he had heard from me. When he had finished, she looked at him with flaming eyes.

"The vile murderer will be discovered," she said in a hoarse voice; "I trust in God's justice."

Her composure was really remarkable, and gave great cause for anxiety. I had lingered behind with the Judge and his clerk. We slowly followed the Captain and Anna about twenty steps in the rear.

"I certainly am most unfortunately situated," said the Judge, turning to me confidentially. "You heard the harsh words which the poor girl, half crazed with pain and horror, spoke to me. I know what those words mean. I am well aware that Fräulein Anna is prejudiced against me. She thinks that the hostility which her father showed to Herr Franz Schorn was partly my fault. That she does so is well known in Luttach,

and I commit no indiscretion in telling you that there is an attachment between Fräulein Anna and Herr Schorn, of which old Pollenz disapproved. Fräulein Anna knows that Herr Schorn is my bitter enemy. She has sided with him against me, but that her prejudice is as intense as the words she has just spoken testify, I confess surprises me. Never before have I seen in her the least sign of dislike. Imagine my position. My official duty compels me to play the part of a disinterested investigator. I cannot spare her pain, but I shall have to subject her, with her old maid, to an examination. I must inquire how it happened that the Lonely House was left unlocked, perhaps by herself; every child in Luttach knows that old Pollenz always locked the front door securely. I would give much, very much, to spare the young lady this examination."

"If you would depute me to make it, Judge, such an act on your part would be entirely justified by the peculiar relations in which you stand to Fräulein Anna Pollenz." The Clerk uttered these words very quietly and in a businesslike tone, but the District Judge

was not pleased. He cast a sinister glance at the Clerk and asked, "What do you mean by peculiar relations, sir?"

"Nothing but what you yourself indicated, and what, to use your own words, every child in Luttach is familiar with," was the quiet reply.

"You allude to the foolish gossip which makes me the young girl's rejected suitor? There is not one word of truth in it."

"Then old Pollenz lied, for he stated this, not as a secret, but quite openly, in Luttach. At all events, such a report does exist, and it will be confirmed unless you make use of your right to depute to me the examination of the young lady."

"No, that I will not do. My standard of official duty is too exalted to permit my neglecting it out of regard for my own feelings. I might perhaps take your advice if I were forced to play the part of examiner during the entire legal process, which must ensue upon this murder, but, fortunately, that is not so; only the preliminaries are our duty. Capital crimes," the Judge said turning to me, "do not come within the domain of the

District Judge. They are the business of the tribunal of the country. Subsequent investigations will take place in Laibach. The preliminary examination alone is my task, which, whatever it may cost me, I will fulfil."

The Clerk made no reply; he simply bowed in sign that he had no further remarks to offer. We now reached the goal of our wanderings. The Lonely House stood before us. The Captain and Anna were standing near the locked door, and upon a wooden bench beside it sat an old woman, old Johanna, "The only servant of the house," the Judge whispered to me. The Captain had just told her of the murder of her master. Paralyzed with horror, incapable of speech, she was gazing up at him. When she tried to rise, she sank back helplessly. The Judge opened the front door with the key which I had given him.

Scarcely had he done so when Anna released herself from the Captain's arm and would have been the first to rush into the house, had not the Judge barred her way.

"Let me go," cried Anna. "I must go to my poor father. You dare not hold me back."

She would have pressed past him, but he prevented her from doing so, and with quiet resolve, in a perfectly judicial manner, said, "You must not see your father yet, Fräulein Anna. My official duty compels me to exclude you from the room in which the crime has been committed until it has been thoroughly searched. The traces which the murderer has perhaps left behind must not be interfered with. You must either stay here outside, or, if you wish, wait in your own room until it is permitted you to see your father. Captain Pollenz, I pray you to remain with your relative and to prevent Fräulein Anna from making an attempt to disturb the investigation by going into the murdered man's room. I cannot permit it."

Anna retired. As the Judge forbade our entrance into the house, her eyes seemed to flash with anger, but she controlled herself, only bestowing upon Herr Foligno a glance of dislike and antipathy.

"I obey," she said, recovering her composure wonderfully. "I will wait in my room with Johanna and my uncle. You shall have nothing to reproach me with. I pray *you*,

sir," she said, turning to the Clerk; "I entreat *you* to search, investigate. The blood of my poor father cries to heaven. I must doubt its justice should you not succeed in discovering the ruthless murderer."

"Rest assured, Fräulein Anna, that I shall leave nothing undone——"

"I did not address you," Anna interrupted the Judge; "I entreat *you*, the assistant, to fulfil your duty; search for the murderer, whoever he may be, deliver him to the vengeance of the law. I trust you. You will not be influenced by fear or considerations of any kind. Do not answer me; I trust you; I know you will do everything to discover the criminal, even though you do not promise me. Come uncle, come Johanna, we will wait in my room."

While Anna was speaking, Herr Foligno's expression was, strangely enough, that of timidity and embarrassment; his lips moved; he seemed to wish to reply but could not. He retreated silently, as Anna, without looking in his direction, passed him. She entered the room at the left of the hall, her own apartment, and the Captain and the old maid, still

half paralyzed with terror, followed her silently.

The Clerk also made no reply to Anna's strange words; he had been much astonished by them, as were all who heard them. With a keen searching look he regarded the Judge. Not until the door had closed behind Anna and the Captain did he say, whispering so softly that only I and the Judge could hear, "If you do not feel sufficiently well, Herr Foligno, to undertake the examination and will delegate me to conduct it, I am quite ready to do so."

"No, no," the Judge replied in as low a tone. Aloud he said, "Follow me, gentlemen. We must begin our melancholy task."

CHAPTER V.

THE INVESTIGATION CONTINUED.

AMONG all the tragic and even terrible recollections which live in my memory, and of which my life has perhaps had more than its share, the most terrible is that of the first few days of my stay in Luttach. Even now they sometimes disturb my sleep at night. In dreams, I am once more in the spacious, dreary room of the Lonely House, with the stiffened corpse of the murdered man before me on the floor. The sunlight through the window falls upon his pale face with its distorted features. I see the terrible wound, and the hard, rasping voice of the District Physician strikes upon my ear as with professional calmness he examines the wound and with all the indifference with which he would discuss the commonest affair of business, explains that any suspicion of suicide is out of the question, coldly pointing out to us bystanders, grouped about the body, our faces pale and awed, the numerous wounds of

which any one would have been mortal, and endeavouring with perfect calmness to prove that the murderer had first attacked his victim from behind, and had finally cut the throat to make sure that the deed was complete. I still hear in dreams the clear, incisive words showing that the murderer must certainly have been intimately acquainted with the murdered man's ways, and that in order to avoid any possibility of the old man's divulging his name with his dying breath, he had inflicted the last gaping wound.

Fearful as had been the impression made upon me in the morning by my discovery, it had not so curdled my blood with horror as did this examination of the body. The necessity for action, the danger which possibly threatened me from the murderer concealed in the house, had strengthened and quickened me in the morning; but now, when I was forced to stand by, an inactive spectator of this terrible scene, the whole horror of the affair for the first time presented itself to my consciousness.

The absence of all emotion, the inflexible

indifference of the District Physician, who, as I learned from the Clerk, had been the friend and physician of old Pollenz, deepened the impression which rendered me almost incapable of connected thought.

I was a prey during the entire investigation to intense nervous agitation. I saw and heard everything that went on around me so clearly that the smallest detail remains stamped upon my memory, but I was incapable of connected thought, of drawing conclusions from what I heard and saw. This I was able to do only later when removed from the spell thus thrown around me. The investigation produced a most agitating effect upon the Clerk also, and in especial upon the Judge, but they could not leave, and were obliged to fulfil their official duty. The Clerk was very pale, but quiet and composed throughout; but the Judge was obliged to exert all his self-control to conquer his excitement, while the physician, still handling the body, demonstrated with great clearness, almost as if he had been a witness of it, the manner in which the murder had been committed.

But however intense his emotion, the Judge proved himself equal to the task his office imposed upon him. When the time came to search the room he displayed the greatest care and circumspection. The bloody knife lying upon the floor at some distance from the body was, of course, the first object of his notice.

"There lies the weapon with which the deed was committed," he cried. "Fortunately, the murderer has left it behind. It may afford a clue in his detection."

But this hope proved to be unfounded. The Clerk testified that the knife was the same which old Pollenz had always carried as a weapon of defense. Whereupon the Judge confirmed what he said; he had seen the knife in his friend's possession, and recognized it, but doubtless it was the weapon with which the crime was committed. "Most certainly," the Judge added, with keen observation, "the murderer must have snatched it from the old man as he tried to defend himself, and in so doing caused a struggle; the knife must have wounded the murderer in the hand, since its handle is stained with blood. We shall un-

doubtedly find further traces of his bleeding hand there in the cabinet which he broke open, and from which he scattered the papers lying about."

The Judge's supposition proved correct. Inside the cabinet, as well as upon the open drawers, there were distinct traces of bloody fingers, and they were also found upon some of the papers strewn on the floor, which the murderer had taken from the cabinet but tossed aside as useless.

It was in this cabinet, as the Judge and the physician both testified, that old Pollenz had kept his money and papers of value. The murderer must have been familiar with this place of deposit, for he had opened only those drawers used for the purpose. The others, which contained receipted bills and worthless papers, had not been opened. The closest search failed to discover either money or papers of value, such as promissory notes or similar documents. All such had been abstracted. On the other hand, an old gold watch, a heavy gold snuffbox, both articles of value, remained untouched.

"The murderer is no common thief or

burglar," the Judge said calmly. "Such an one would not have despised valuable articles like these."

"Certainly not," the physician added; "my firm belief is that he was an intimate acquaintance of old Pollenz. None other would have opened those drawers unless they knew they would reward a search."

"Unfortunately, this is the only hint we have to put us upon the trace of the criminal," the Judge said in a tone of disappointment. "Our melancholy investigation has had no result of value."

This was indeed so. The murderer had left the Lonely House without leaving any traces except those of his bleeding hand. In spite of the most careful search, nothing further was discovered. The Judge set down in his deposition all that had been done. It was as clear and well composed as that which he had written previously in his room. I confirmed his report that I had found the Lonely House and in especial the room in which the crime had been committed in the same condition in which I had left it. It now remained for the Judge to fulfil the hardest part of his task.

He was obliged to examine the daughter and the old servant of the murdered man. He evidently feared to meet with difficulties caused by the aversion to him which the fair Anna had so openly expressed, but it was necessary to make this examination in order to find some explanation of the surprising fact that the Lonely House, usually so carefully locked, should have been left wide open at midday.

The Judge's fear, however, proved to be groundless. He found Anna in her room, wonderfully quiet and composed. She immediately declared herself ready to be examined, and only asked that the Captain, the Clerk and myself should be the sole witnesses present. The Judge willingly granted this request, and every difficulty was removed. She testified that she had that day had her breakfast as usual with her father at eleven o'clock, and, close upon twelve, had left the Lonely House with Johanna to make some purchases in Luttach, and at the same time to visit her old aunt. Her father, as usual, accompanied her to the front door and locked and bolted it behind her. It was his custom when left alone

in the house to bolt himself into his sitting-room. Whenever any one knocked at the front door, he always first made sure of his visitor by looking out of the window, and, when he was alone, never allowed a stranger to cross his threshold. Even acquaintances in whom perchance he did not repose entire confidence were always dismissed by him from the window. He did not even open the door for them. As to her father's property in papers of value and money, Anna knew nothing. Her father had never talked with her about his pecuniary circumstances. She could not possibly tell of how much he had been robbed.

With perfect composure Anna gave her testimony, but, when in conclusion the Judge asked her if she had met any one upon her way to Luttach, the colour suddenly mounted to her cheek and as quickly left it, and her "no" was by no means so clear and decided as had been her earlier report. She blushed still more deeply when the Judge asked if her father had any special mistrust of any of his acquaintances, and assured her that what she should say would be entirely confidential,

even if there should be nothing in her reply to arouse suspicion.

“I will not answer this question,” Anna replied, after she had stood for a moment with downcast eyes. “No one in the world has a right to ask such a question, and you least of all.”

To this declaration she adhered, and the Judge was obliged to finish his deposition without learning anything further from her. The examination of old Johanna also produced no further result.

Thus the examination ended, and the Judge could no longer refuse to allow the daughter to see her father's body. Conducted by Captain Pollenz, Anna entered the old man's sleeping-room, where the captain of gendarmes and the physician had laid the murdered man upon the bed. The Captain afterwards told me that the composure shown by the young girl at the terrible sight had filled him with genuine admiration. She kneeled beside the bed on which the corpse had been laid. She took the cold, stiff hand in hers and kissed it, while tears rolled over her cheeks. The Captain would have said a few

words to comfort her, but she interrupted him.

"Let my grief have way, uncle," she said sadly; "you do not know what I have lost in him. He was harsh to every one else, but he loved me with all his heart, me only in the world, and I am perhaps the cause of his death. This it is that fills me almost with despair. The thought that I may be guilty of his death is almost unendurable."

"How can you think such a thing, my child?" the Captain asked, much startled.

"I cannot explain it to you, uncle," Anna continued, kissing the dead man's hand again and again. "It is perhaps only a foolish thought, but it arose in my mind when I heard how cruelly my father had been murdered, and I cannot banish it. I dare not share it with any one, not even with you, my dear, kind uncle. I commit an injustice perhaps in not being able to banish it. I know nothing, nothing which gives me the right to entertain it. It is only a vague, fearful foreboding, oppressing my heart all the more because I must bear it all alone and can share it with no one in the world."

The girl refused all explanation of her mysterious words. For a long while she silently knelt by the bed, holding the dead man's hand in hers, but at last she rose and followed the Captain to her room, in which we—that is, the Clerk, the Judge, the physician, and myself—were awaiting her. During Anna's absence with the Captain we had been discussing the future of the young girl. It was impossible that she should remain with the old servant and the murdered man alone in the Lonely House. We had therefore determined to take her back with us to Luttach. The physician had kindly offered to give her an asylum as a guest in his house. His wife, he told us, was very fond of the fair Anna; she would rejoice most heartily to show any loving service to the unfortunate child. Anna could not possibly live with her old, peevish Aunt Laucic, who was even a greater miser than old Pollenz. She would find none of the sympathy and love of which she stood in such need with that old dragon.

The kindness and friendliness for the unfortunate young girl which prompted the words of the physician reconciled me to him.

His businesslike indifference during the investigation had made me almost hate him, but now I acknowledged to myself that I had been unjust and that he was no cold and heartless man, but, on the contrary, a very kindly, benevolent old doctor.

We had arranged everything as we thought for the best, but when Anna returned to us we found that our wise arrangements were entirely useless. She declared, with a decision remarkable in so young a girl, that she would not leave her father, but would stay beside him.

In vain did we all entreat her, the Judge alone prudently refraining from doing so. We used our most eloquent powers of persuasion.

In vain did the Captain add his voice, and in vain did the physician explain to her what an insufficient protection old Johanna would be in the Lonely House during the next night.

"If Johanna is afraid, she can go with you to Luttach," she said. "I am not afraid to remain alone with my beloved dead."

As she was immovable, we were obliged to comply. We could not force her to go with

us to Luttach, but we did not leave her alone in the Lonely House, for the Captain declared he would not leave her; if she stayed, he would stay also; they could make up a bed quite comfortable enough for an old soldier.

Anna was reluctant to accept this offer, but the Captain refused to withdraw it. He said he could be quite as obstinate as Anna herself, and thus he remained in the Lonely House, while we returned to Luttach.

CHAPTER VI.

TWO WOUNDED HANDS.

BOTH kitchen and dining-room in the "Golden Vine" were crowded with guests—a very unusual thing of a week-day. The report of the murder in the Lonely House had spread quickly, not only in the little town, but also in the surrounding villages, and, naturally, all were eager to hear further particulars, and could find no better place for gratifying this desire than in the inn, the home of the Judge, who was sure to be there in the evening.

In the spacious kitchen, which was the gathering place of guests of the lower classes, peasants and small tradesmen, there was quite a crowd. Some were even obliged to drink their wine standing; all the benches and chairs were occupied. Here not a German word was to be heard; the talk was entirely in Slavonic; even around the hearth where Frau Franzka received her intimate friends, all spoke in that tongue.

Nearly twenty men, principally petty tradesmen from Luttach, were sitting and standing around the huge hearth listening respectfully to Frau Franzka's words, who, as she cooked and broiled, was obliged to give all the details of the terrible deed which the "German fly-catcher"—such was the name that had already been bestowed upon me in Luttach—had discovered. When I passed through the kitchen to go to the dining-room, I was most politely and kindly greeted by all present, while they looked at me with undisguised curiosity.

In the dining-room there was a far larger assembly than usual. All the tables were occupied, but principally the great round one at which the Burgomaster presided. All the gentlemen to whom I had been presented on the previous evening were present, with the exception of the Captain. The District Physician, two gentlemen (strangers to me), and, oddly enough, Franz Schorn, were also there; the last sat next the Judge's assistant.

I had evidently been expected. A chair beside the District Judge had been reserved for me, and when I appeared—quite too late

to suit the impatience of those present—I was cordially received. Even Franz Schorn rose from his seat, and when the other gentlemen offered me their hands, he held out his—not the right hand, but the left, like the Judge, who had protected his wounded hand with a black glove. I remarked that Franz Schorn did not use his right hand, but kept it concealed in the breast of his coat, which was closely buttoned.

The conversation was hardly interrupted by my arrival. Naturally it had been concerning the murder in the Lonely House, and it so continued after I had taken my place at the table. It was to me that all inquisitive inquiries were now addressed—to me instead of to the Judge or his assistant or to the physician. I was obliged to relate all that I had seen. I was questioned about the smallest details; the most insignificant interested every one.

The Judge, the assistant and Franz Schorn alone were silent. I could inform the two first of nothing new; there was no need for them to question me, and Franz Schorn probably did not wish to thrust himself forward with inquiries.

It was evident, however, that he listened with intense interest to everything that I related. As I spoke I narrowly observed the behaviour of the Judge and of Franz Schorn, the two rivals. Herr Foligno appeared scarcely to hear what I was saying. His eyes were fixed gloomily on his wineglass, and he seemed to take no part in what was going on, but from time to time as he looked up I could see that he heard every word that I said. Franz Schorn kept his eyes riveted upon me as I spoke. The description of my first discovery of the murdered man evidently horrified him; he was more agitated by it than any of my other hearers.

After I had ended my narrative, and it had been completed by the physician, the question of course was discussed as to who the murderer could be, whence he had come, how he had entered the locked house, whither he had fled, and what had been the amount of his robbery. In this discussion, however, the Judge and his assistant and Franz Schorn took no part, although they listened with close attention.

The physician defended with much acute-

ness his own theory that only an intimate acquaintance of old Pollenz could have committed the crime; on the other hand, many present maintained that the murderer must be some Italian from Trieste, for neither in Luttach nor in the surrounding country was there a man capable of such a deed.

During this discussion, to which Franz Schorn listened very attentively, the physician accidentally pushed aside the left arm of his neighbour—Franz Schorn—who dropped the cigar which he was holding in his hand and stooped to pick it up. As he did so, he instinctively drew from his bosom his right hand, which had hitherto been concealed by his coat. It was bound about with a white bandage, upon which were several spots of blood. He thrust it quickly into his breast again, but not before the physician had noticed the spots on the white linen.

“Ah, Franz! What is the matter with your hand?” he asked kindly.

“Nothing,” Franz replied curtly; “a slight cut.”

“Slight! That can hardly be; if you have a bandaged hand and don’t use it, it must be

a tolerably deep cut. Of course, you have done nothing, as usual, but wrap a rag about it. You young people are incorrigible. You never reflect that the neglect of such cuts, which you consider insignificant, may cost you the hand itself. Take off the bandage; I want to see what it is."

"It is nothing; a trifle, not worth mentioning."

"All the more readily should you show it to me. You owe obedience to an old friend of your father's, you obstinate fellow; so off with your bandage; I wish to see the wound."

"Certainly, if you insist," Franz replied, holding out his hand and unwinding the bandage. It did not come off easily, but adhered to the wound and a few drops of blood followed its removal.

"A couple of good cuts," said the physician, examining the hand; "not dangerous; they will heal without any particular care if you spare your hand a little for a couple of days; but how did you get such strange cuts? Four fingers implicated, and another gash in the palm. It looks as if you had done it with a knife."

“And so I did,” Franz replied. “I was using a large knife in the vineyard to-day and laid it down upon a high wall; it fell and would have pierced my foot, if instead of shifting it, I had not foolishly grasped at the falling knife and seized the sharp blade instead of the handle. That is the whole story. Such slight cuts are not worth mentioning.” He wrapped the bandage around his hand again and concealed it as before in the breast of his coat.

“Such slight cuts are not worth mentioning,” the young man had said, and it was true; they were insignificant. Nevertheless they aroused in me a chain of thought which filled me with dread. Involuntarily I thought of the bloody, dagger-like knife which I had seen in the Lonely House. If the murderer in his contest with the old man had endeavoured to take the knife from him and had accidentally seized it by the blade, his hand would have been wounded precisely as was that of Franz Schorn. Schorn had hitherto kept his right hand concealed. Why so? Did he wish to conceal the wound? An involuntary motion, an accident, had compelled him

to show the bandaged hand, and it was with great reluctance that he had acceded to the physician's request.

I looked at the District Judge. The same suspicion which had made me shudder had been aroused also in him. I could read it in the lowering, searching glance which he gave to the hand as Franz was wrapping it in the bandage again. When he looked up afterwards and his gaze met mine, his eyes were more eloquent than his tongue could have been. He slowly raised his hand in its black glove as if in token of our understanding each other. Strangely enough, his motion and his look had the effect of instantly banishing the dark suspicion that had been awakened within me. I had no right to entertain it. Had not the Judge himself also accidentally wounded his right hand this very day? Might I not have seen him also near the Lonely House, since he had been climbing among the rocks in search of flowers? No, it would be rank folly to found a suspicion with regard to Franz Schorn upon such accidental circumstances. That the young man seemed even more gloomy and preoccupied than on the

previous evening, and that he scarcely uttered a word, furnished no grounds for any suspicion with regard to him. Must he not be deeply agitated by the terrible death of an old man with whom he stood in such close, although hostile, relations? I blamed myself for being so carried away by my indignation as to be ready to find in insignificant trifles an undue importance. Besides, with the exception of the Judge, whose duty it was to investigate all grounds of suspicion, no other member of the company had thought of connecting Franz Schorn's wounded hand with the murder. They all continued to converse freely; even the physician, so acute in piecing out evidence, who might have entertained some vague suspicion, had none at all; he had thought no possible evil of Franz, and continued to address him now from time to time as kindly and unreservedly as before. Still, this evening I was very uncomfortable among them all. Their continued talk, always of the same details, always of the horrible crime, increased my nervous agitation to an intolerable degree. It was impossible to change the subject of the conversation; it always

reverted to the murder in the Lonely House.

This perpetual return to the same horrible subject stretched me upon the rack; I could no longer endure it. As soon as I had finished my trout and my wine, I rose to withdraw to my room. The Judge followed my example, and rose also. After emptying his tall glass at a draught, he said he was tired and unhinged and needed to go to bed early after so terrible a day. His clerk and the physician, with several other gentlemen, courteously entreated me to stay at least for half an hour longer, it was so early. Without positive discourtesy I could not refuse their request, and ordered myself another glass of wine. The Judge followed my example, although no one had requested him to remain. In the short time that I stayed, barely half an hour, he drank two full glasses of wine, the last at a draught just as I arose and declined to remain longer.

Together we ascended the stairs. Mizka preceded us with a candle. When we reached the landing in the first story, the Judge offered me his left hand in farewell.

“Good-night, Herr Professor,” he said

aloud, adding in a whisper, "I fear I shall be obliged to ask you to-morrow to give me officially an account of your meeting with Herr Franz Schorn in the neighbourhood of the Lonely House." He looked around at Mizka, who was opening the door of my room, and as she entered it he continued, "A ground of suspicion such as the wound in his right hand compels me to abandon all personal considerations."

Greatly startled, I replied, "Mere chance, Herr Foligno; you, too, have wounded your right hand to-day."

My innocent words made him start as if I had struck him a blow in the face. I could not see his features, it was too dark on the landing; a weak ray of light coming from the open door of my room was the only illumination; but the quiver in his voice as he answered me after a pause of a second, betrayed the disastrous effect of my words.

"You are perfectly right, Herr Professor; it may be 'mere chance.' I shall not proceed against Herr Schorn. I will even try to combat my suspicion of evil in him, my enemy, but it is my duty to search for further

grounds of suspicion against him. That must be done in spite of my hostile feeling towards him. Good-night, Herr Professor."

He pressed my hand once more, and we parted.

Mizka was already busy in my room putting everything in order for the night. She was obliged to do this as quickly as possible, for the number of guests below in the dining-room and in the kitchen depended upon her services; but she could not forego a little gossip. She told me that before I had entered the dining-room this evening there had been quite a quarrel between the Judge and his assistant. They had been seated at the round table when Franz Schorn entered the room and looked around for a place. All the tables were full, and the Clerk had invited Schorn to sit beside him at the round table. This made the Judge violently angry, but the Clerk declared that the Judge had no more authority than any other guest in the dining-room of the inn. Franz Schorn would have retired, but the Clerk detained him, and the physician, who had been an old friend of Franz's dead father, had declared that he himself would

stay only on condition of Franz's remaining, and would never again take his place at the round table if Herr Foligno denied a seat there to Franz. The Burgomaster, too, and the other gentlemen, who were not always friendly to Franz, now took his part, so that the Judge was obliged to yield, and Franz, induced by their persuasions, took his seat; but neither the Judge nor Franz after the quarrel had exchanged a word.

What strange occurrences were these in this little country town! Even here, the few cultivated people, so circumscribed in their social relations, were divided by hatred and prejudice. I undressed myself and, with a memory of the gymnastic feats of my boyhood, clambered into my lofty bed. I was sadly in need of repose. The agitations of the day had been too much for my old body. They had exhausted my strength, and yet excitement of mind conquered bodily weariness. I could not sleep. I tried in vain to banish the memory of the dreadful scenes through which I had passed. I tried to think of it all with indifference; but what I had seen in the Lonely House scared away sleep, of

which I had such sore need. Hours and hours passed. The time seemed eternal before at last I closed my weary eyes.

And the Judge had the same experience; he could not sleep that night. As long as I lay awake in bed I heard the sound of his footsteps above me, as he paced his room to and fro restlessly. Surely the same memories were agitating him which denied me the blessing of slumber. The investigation at the Lonely House had not been the mere fulfilment of a duty for him, any more than it had been for the physician. The horror of it all had impressed him as profoundly as it had myself. It did not lessen my opinion of him that he should thus have preserved in the midst of his official duties a warm, sensitive heart.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TWO REQUESTS.

AGAIN I awoke early in the morning. I did not need much sleep for physical refreshment, and although it had lasted but a few hours, I felt quite fresh and well. The beautiful morning should serve me for another expedition, and I wished to start as early as possible; in Southern Ukraine only the early morning hours are suitable for mountain walks and climbing. As long as the dew still glitters on the grass, wandering in the Ukraine mountains is indescribably delightful, but when the glowing sun has absorbed the last dew-drops, when its direct rays are reflected from gray rocks, when no breath of air fans the climber's cheek, mountain-climbing becomes altogether too hard a task for an old man. I finished my breakfast before six o'clock and was all ready for a start. Whither should I turn my steps? The forest above the Chapel of St. Nikolas allured me. I had found such entomological treasures there on the previous

day that I surely could do nothing better than go thither again. I could not collect too many specimens of the grub of the *Saturnia cæcigena*, for, unfortunately, I could not be sure that each larva would produce a butterfly. To St. Nikolas, then, I took my way and by the narrow path. I had succeeded in descending it without accident the day before, and it was surely not too dangerous for me to ascend it. I set out. The path certainly was better than its reputation. It had no danger for a climber not subject to dizziness, and was quite firm beneath the foot. I had often ascended far more steep and dangerous pathways in my search for some rare plant.

The easy footpath leading to the Lonely House was soon reached, and I strode forward sturdily. On the previous day I had hurried along it, only desirous to reach Lut-tach as quickly as possible. To-day I feasted my eyes with the view of the charming country upon which I looked down, while at the same time I scrutinized with the keenness of a collector the gentle ascent on my left where I might perhaps discover some treasure grow-

ing among the rocks. Not far from the Lonely House I perceived to my great joy in a spot which could be reached without difficulty many beautiful specimens of the very orchid *Ophrys Bertolini* which the Judge had brought to me yesterday. This was an unexpected delight. In yesterday's excitement I had neglected to put the charming flowers in water, and when I returned from the investigation they were so withered that they were not worth preserving for my herbarium. Now I could gather many glorious specimens without any trouble.

I left the path and easily climbed the rocks soon reaching the spot where the orchids grew. But no sooner had I arrived there than to my astonishment several trampled flowers showed me that another had been before me, who was also a collector, and had plucked many blossoms of the rare *Ophrys*.

One spot showed me that whoever he was, he had been no true botanist; a true botanist would have taken the plants, roots and all, not the blossoms only. He who collected the flowers here must have been in a hurry; he had dropped several blossoms which lay

wilted on the ground and had evidently been plucked yesterday.

Was this the spot where the Judge had collected the beautiful *Ophrys* for me? The specimens which he had brought me were without roots. I now recalled this circumstance, which had escaped my notice on the previous day; but he had said that it had cost him some trouble and even danger to reach the rare plants with the habitat of which he was acquainted. He had fallen in doing so and had lacerated his hand. It was impossible that he could have done so here; for here was no possible danger; no flowers on the mountains could be plucked with more facility than these.

And yet here the Judge had been. He had certainly gathered the *Ophrys* for me here. I found one unmistakable proof of his presence. On the ground lay a red and yellow silk pocket handkerchief, just exactly such a handkerchief as the Judge had carried the day before yesterday. I remembered it perfectly. Of course he had lost it here while plucking the flowers.

Involuntarily I smiled at the good man's

boast; in order to give his gift a higher value, he had talked of danger in procuring it. I would tease him a little for his bragging. When I returned his handkerchief I would expatiate on the terrible danger of the place where the *Ophrys Bertolini* was to be found.

Still the plucking of the flowers had not been entirely without danger for him. I could not comprehend how he could have fallen on this smooth spot and wounded his hand, but that he had done so the handkerchief testified. On the yellow silk there were several brown stains, which I recognized as blood. The hackneyed old saying, "No fall so slight but may kill you quite," occurred to me. With a smile I put the handkerchief in my pocket to return it to its owner when I got back to the inn. I dug up a number of the beautiful *Ophrys Bertolini* growing here by hundreds, and then, walking on quickly, in scarcely five minutes I reached the Lonely House. I was going to pass it, but from a window of the upper story the Captain called, begging me to wait a moment and he would join me.

He came and greeted me with great cor-

diality. He had passed a melancholy night. Old Johanna had been half crazy with fear and was absolutely useless. He had tried to persuade her to occupy one of the two rooms on the right of the hall, but she had fled to her bed in the upper story and locked herself in. Therefore the Captain had earnestly entreated Anna to leave the Lonely House, but all his words had been in vain. Anna displayed wonderful composure in her profound grief, but at the same time a firmness of purpose bordering on obstinacy. She had declared that she would not leave the Lonely House as long as it sheltered her father's body. She could not leave it all alone there. She would stay with him until he was buried, and she watched beside the corpse for half the night. Morning had dawned before she betook herself to rest.

"Anna is a strange child," said the Captain. "There are odd contradictions in her character. She is gentle and yielding and at the same time absolutely firm, open to no persuasion; sometimes frank and confiding; at others reserved and almost suspicious even of me, although she has repeatedly assured

me that she trusts no human being as she does me and my brother, the Burgomaster. With entire frankness she has given me a detailed account of all the misery and wretchedness which has existed here in the house ever since the day when Franz Schorn asked her in marriage of her father. Towards herself the old man was kind and caressing, although she declared to him that she never would forsake Franz Schorn, that she never would marry the Judge; but to every other human being, and particularly to Franz, he displayed positive hatred, regarding all with profound suspicion, even old Johanna. He was completely dominated by the fear that some day he should be attacked and murdered. Wherefore he always bolted himself into his room, and if he admitted any one was armed with a dagger-like knife. He kept this terrible knife in his hand even whilst old Johanna arranged his room; even from her he feared some secret attack. No entreaty of Anna's could induce him to moderate his savage hatred of Franz. She, on her part, declared that she never would forsake Franz as long as she lived. This had led to continual strife be-

tween herself and her father, for she had told him frankly that he must shut her up in a close prison if he wished to prevent her from seeing Franz, and she had seen him almost daily; when her father locked himself up in his room after the midday meal to sleep for an hour, she always left the house to see Franz, who awaited her beneath the large oak not far away. Her father knew this, but had done nothing to prevent it, after she had declared to him that she should continue to do it, and if he locked her in the house, she would try to break the locks. The strange girl told me all this with reckless frankness, while at the same time she refused me any explanation, although I begged her to give it, of what she meant yesterday when she declared that she perhaps was guilty of her father's death. My little Anna is a riddle to me," the Captain thus closed his long account, "but I love her none the less and I shall stay here to protect her. I will not leave her all by herself in the Lonely House. Now you can do me a favour, Herr Professor. When you return at midday from your excursion to St. Nikolas, stop here before the Lonely House

once more, and I will give you some directions to take to Luttach for my brother, the Burgo-master. He must provide a suitable home for Anna in Luttach if she refuses to accept the doctor's invitation after her father's funeral, for which he must also give directions. I will put all this down in a letter, which you will have the kindness to give to my brother yourself."

I at once promised what he asked, and we parted the best of friends. The Captain returned to the Lonely House to write his letter, which, as he said, was quite a task for an old soldier unaccustomed for many years to hold a pen.

I continued my walk and soon reached the little Church of St. Nikolas. Again I fed my eyes on the charming prospect and then proceeded to collect. I scrambled about in the forest, hither and thither, for some hours; then up on the bald rocky side of Nanos, and not until my bottles and boxes were so full that I could accommodate no more treasures, and the heat had become oppressive, did I take my way back towards noon by the same path which I had followed yesterday. In a

little while I reached the footpath leading to the Lonely House, and on the very same spot where I had yesterday encountered Franz Schorn I found him again to-day, but he did not avoid me; he awaited me. He was not alone; beside him, with his arm around her waist, stood pretty Anna. They were a charming pair. I delighted in the sight of the two beautiful young people. Franz was certainly a handsome fellow. Now, as he looked down on his lovely companion, with eyes full of the tenderest affection, the beauty of his features, which a gloomy expression had hitherto concealed, was plainly visible.

When the young man observed me, a shadow crossed his brow. Without releasing his companion, with his left hand he took off his straw hat in greeting. Then Anna, too, saw me, and with a blush beckoned to me kindly. She made no attempt to release herself from the embracing arm of the young man.

“We were awaiting you here, Herr Professor,” said Franz, as I reached them. “Captain Pollenz informed my betrothed that you, in coming from St. Nikolas, had promised to

stop, towards noon, at the Lonely House; therefore we came to meet you to make a request of you."

"Which I shall certainly comply with if possible," I replied, regarding the young girl with genuine delight. She blushed, but looked up with kindling eyes at Franz as he uttered the word "betrothed."

"It is a request that may seem strange to you, Herr Professor," Franz continued, "but, nevertheless, I will make it; I am convinced that you would not wish to cause annoyance either to myself or to my dear betrothed."

"Most certainly not. Pray tell me quite frankly what you wish."

"It is not much. I would only ask you not to mention to any one our meeting yesterday here in this place."

The request in itself seemed trivial enough, but the look which accompanied it was far from meaningless. It betokened intense anxiety as to whether or not I would accede to what he asked.

In truth, the young man's request was a strange one. Involuntarily my eyes turned to

his wounded right hand. All diverse thoughts ran riot in my brain. I remembered the large double-edged knife with its bloody handle lying on the floor of the room in the Lonely House, and then came the memory of the cut on a brown hand and the doctor's voice saying, "That looks as if you had grasped a knife by the blade." Again I saw Franz turn from me to hurry through the undergrowth, and again I saw him with eyes gloomily cast down as he listened to the physician's words. I recalled his bitter hostility to old Pollenz, and the old man's words, "That fellow will kill me one of these days." Hitherto I had entertained no downright suspicion of the young fellow, but it suddenly stirred within me.

"Why do you wish me not to mention our meeting?" I asked in reply.

"Because I begged Franz to ask you this," Anna replied for the young man, whose features as I spoke resumed their wonted gloomy expression. "Franz told me that yesterday he turned away from you because he wished to avoid any meeting with you. He feared it might cause you annoyance, if you

had happened to be seen by any chance passer-by walking with him. He had been waiting for me a long time in vain beneath the old oak where we are used to meet every day at noon. I could not come because my father had sent me down to Luttach. Franz was in a very bad humour when he met you, and so, to avoid greeting you, he turned away into the forest."

Anna's words had a peculiar effect upon me. They strengthened my suspicions. If he were not guilty, would Franz have thought it necessary to have the young girl explain to me why he was in the neighbourhood of the Lonely House at noon, and why he had turned away from me with such sullen looks?

"You have not yet told me why I should not mention my meeting with Herr Schorn," I replied.

"I will explain that to you myself," Franz said hurriedly, "my betrothed thinks that if Foligno should learn that I was seen yesterday here in the neighbourhood of the Lonely House, the malice and hatred with which he regards me would find expression in vile suspicion of me."

"It would certainly be so. I entreat you, dear Herr Professor, do not tell a human being that you met Franz yesterday."

As she spoke the young girl looked up at me with such entreaty in her beautiful eyes that my heart was softened. I was in an awkward position. Ought I to tell her that I could not comply with her request, because I had already informed the Judge of my meeting Franz? This I could not do. I could not warn Franz without perhaps injuring the investigation; but, on the other hand, I certainly could not make a promise which it was already impossible to keep.

"I can promise nothing," I replied guardedly; "in an official examination one is bound to conceal nothing."

"Oh, Herr Professor, I beg, I entreat you——"

Franz interrupted her, and, casting at me a look which was almost menacing, exclaimed, "Do not say another word, Anna; the Herr Professor is right; it was folly, yes, wrong, for me to yield to your desire and make this request of the Herr Professor, who ought not to comply with it. If that scoundrel, Foligno,

suspects me, I know how to meet his suspicion. Come, Anna, we ought not to detain the gentleman any longer."

He lifted his hat by way of farewell, and walked towards the forest with the young girl. My mind was filled with contradictory thoughts. Can that proud, self-assertive young man be a miserable criminal? I would so gladly have banished all suspicion of him, but—how terrible it was that so lovely and charming a girl had perhaps bestowed the wealth of her affection upon her father's murderer!

I walked slowly towards the Lonely House, where the Captain, sitting before the door, was awaiting me. He handed me the letter for his brother, gave me various verbal commissions, and I left with a promise to visit him shortly in the Lonely House.

"Shall I bring the Herr Professor's lunch into the garden?" Mizka asked me as I entered the kitchen of the Golden Vine on my return from my excursion. "The Judge has been lunching in the garden, and is sitting with his coffee beneath the great linden."

The *Ophrys Bertolini* occurred to me. I smiled at the remembrance of the Judge's

boast and was pleased at the idea of teasing him. Of course I ordered my lunch in the garden and betook myself thither.

The Judge was sipping his coffee and smoking his long cigar at the round table beneath the spreading linden. He seemed sunk in a profound reverie, leaning his head upon his hand and with downcast eyes. I was struck with his pallor and with the sallowness and the drawn look of his features. At my first words he started violently, and for a moment gazed at me with terror, almost as if awaking from an oppressive dream, but in an instant he recovered his self-control, and greeted me with a smile.

"I think I was dozing," he said; "the terrible heat makes me sleepy."

Why should he have told such an untruth? He had not been dozing; just before he started he had raised his hand to his cigar and had taken a long whiff.

"I admire you, Herr Professor," he said, "for being able to climb about in such heat. I suffer from it even here in the shade of the linden. I trust you were richly rewarded for your trouble."

"I was indeed," I replied smiling. "I have had great luck. I have been so fortunate as even to discover the place where, yesterday, you plucked for me the charming *Ophrys Bertolini*."

My jesting words produced a strange effect. Herr Foligno stared at me blankly; his sallow face grew ashy pale; his mouth twitched convulsively as he said brokenly, "No, impossible! How—how—could you—how could you get there?"

"In the easiest way in the world," I replied, tickled that the discovery of his boast had so startled the worthy gentleman. "The spot, so difficult and even dangerous to attain, in reaching which you fell on the rocks and wounded your hand, I found right on the road to the Lonely House and most easy of attainment. From the path I saw the *Ophrys* blooming, and mounted without any difficulty to where it grew."

"Then you have had the good fortune to discover a new home for it which I had not known," Herr Foligno replied, having regained his self-control with surprising celerity. "I found the orchid on an overhanging

rock in quite a distant part of the country."

"Indeed, that is very remarkable. Did you, by chance, lose your pocket handkerchief there? I found it in my spot—or is it not yours? Look, the yellow silk shows some spots of blood, probably from a wounded hand."

With a laugh I drew out the handkerchief and handed it to him; the black gloved hand with which he took it trembled. He examined it quite attentively for some time, and then said quietly, "This certainly is a remarkable coincidence. The handkerchief actually belongs to me, and I probably lost it yesterday in climbing about the rocks, but certainly not where you found it, for I was not even in the neighbourhood of the Lonely House. Probably one of the young goatherds here who scramble about everywhere in the mountains found it, and lost it again where you discovered it."

With the greatest calmness he put the handkerchief in his pocket. I could not refuse him my admiration, for his barefaced explanation struck me as quite brilliant. Whether I believed him or not, I must pre-

tend to do so. Laughing heartily, I replied:

"I congratulate you, Herr Foligno, on the happy chance which led the little goatherd and the old Professor to the same place, one losing, the other finding your handkerchief to restore it to you."

The Judge probably felt the irony in my words, but he took no notice of it. He offered me his hand cordially.

"It certainly is a very strange coincidence," he said. "If my acquaintances here should hear of it, it might give them material for teasing me quite unpleasantly. You will oblige me, Herr Professor, if you will not mention this little occurrence. May I rely upon you?"

"Certainly; I will be silent as the grave," I replied, still laughing, but the suspicious and evil glance which he cast at me quickly silenced my laughter. He said nothing further about the handkerchief or the *Ophrys*; he only made a few remarks about the unusual heat of the weather so late in the season, and then arose, saying that he was obliged to return to his office, and, therefore, to his regret, must leave me.

CHAPTER VIII.

QUIET WEEKS.

THE first eventful days which I passed in Luttach were followed by weeks that were more serene. Favoured by the beautiful weather, I made daily excursions in every direction, reaping a rich harvest everywhere. I grew more and more familiar with the peculiar features of the country, and every day I grew more in sympathy with the smiling, charming valley shut in by mountains crowned with bald summits. The contrast between the barren gray rocks and the luxuriant valley at their feet particularly charmed me, and I especially delighted in the view when the sun sank behind the mountains, which were quickly enveloped in a soft twilight mist, the noble outlines of their peaks showing clear against the sky in the light of the setting sun.

The character of the inhabitants of Southern Ukraine soon grew familiar to me. Inter-course with the country folk whom I met on

my excursions was, of course, very limited; we could not understand each other's language. Here and there a man who had served in the army could speak German, but only brokenly. The women for the most part spoke scarcely a German word, and they found it very difficult to understand the few Slavonic words which I had learned from Mizka and which I certainly pronounced very badly. There could be no attempt at conversation, but nevertheless the Slavonic country folk tried to testify kindness and cordiality for the stranger.

The peasants evidently held it their duty to offer the hospitality of their fields to the "fly-catcher," as they dubbed me, although sometimes they found the grass trodden down where he had been. Unlike the Swiss peasantry, who load with abuse any stranger venturing to trespass in their fields, these Slavonic country folk seemed glad to have me pluck flowers and pursue butterflies wherever I would; nay, they would at times even point out places among the rocks most easy of access and would assist in my search, never asking for money, accepting at most, with

many Slavonic words of thanks, a cheap cigar. Scarcely ever in all my travels have I met a peasantry so amiable and kindly as these much slandered Slavonic country folk. I never heard a harsh word or found a trace of that hatred of Germans against which I had been cautioned.

And yet it was none the less there at the bottom of all their hearts; but it was not for the German proper, as the Burgomaster had told me on that first evening, but for those Ukrainers who in a Slavonic country aimed at remaining faithful to Germany. Of this I had daily proof in the expressions which I heard with regard to Franz Schorn.

The young man interested me greatly and I took every opportunity to inform myself as to his circumstances, his earlier life, and everything regarding him. What I learned was not of a nature either to weaken or strengthen my suspicion, and, besides, I could not but acknowledge to myself that all the sources from which I could gain information were unfit to give me a true, distinct picture of a young fellow living in brooding seclusion, as it were, in a community rife with party

hatred. The Clerk, the Captain, and the Burgomaster were the only men who could sufficiently rid themselves of prejudice to speak really well of the young man.

All acknowledged that Franz Schorn was an industrious, capable farmer, who took admirable care of the estate inherited from his father; that he was well educated, to a degree above his station; but no praise was accorded to his character; he was said to be an obstinate, sullen fellow, ready for deeds of violence, filled with party hatred, maltreating his Slavonic labourers, covetous and hard-hearted. He had no pity for the poor; his only desire was to gain money and increase his patrimony, which was the reason why he had cast his eye on the rich and pretty Anna Pollenz, not because he loved her, but from greed of gain. This was the verdict of his enemies concerning him. The Captain and the Clerk alone maintained that he was a man of honour, incapable of mean or avaricious conduct; that he was reserved and defiant, willing to defend himself with some violence against all party hatred, and in other respects the victim of slander and low sus-

picion. How could I find the truth in these conflicting descriptions? I pondered the question in vain. It was certainly remarkable that a handsome, well-to-do, educated young man should be so generally detested, and it was hard to believe that such widespread hatred was entirely without foundation.

I now had many opportunities of observing him. He came almost regularly every evening to the Golden Vine and took the place at the round table which the Clerk always reserved for him. It seemed to me that this was done in order to establish a more kindly social feeling between Franz and the rest of the company who nightly assembled in the inn. The Clerk evidently endeavoured in the kindest way to draw him into the conversation, which he knew how to conduct so that Schorn would have an opportunity to be heard to the very best advantage in displaying his clear judgment and admirable intelligence.

The Captain, the Burgomaster, and the doctor aided the Clerk in his endeavour to establish peace between Franz and the rest of the

company, who, out of regard for these gentlemen, became less antagonistic, to be sure, but still remained decidedly indifferent. They were content to do what was required of them socially, greeting the young man when he entered, but in conversation they avoided all direct talk with him, and since he addressed all that he said to the three above-named members of the party, he rarely exchanged a word with the others. The antipathy existing between Franz and the Judge was especially observable. Between these two there was an insurmountable barrier of profound dislike. They never exchanged either a greeting or a word. Franz never even looked at the Judge, although Herr Foligno watched him narrowly.

As soon as Franz appeared among the company in the evening, the Judge fell silent. Even though he might before have talked continually, and at times had even attempted to monopolize the conversation, from the time when Franz appeared he confined himself to monosyllables or a word thrown in here and there. He listened to all that was going on and with special interest when the talk turned

upon the failure to discover the perpetrator of the crime committed in the Lonely House. At such times his gaze would be riveted with a strange intensity upon Franz Schorn. No word that the young man spoke, no expression of his countenance, escaped him then. It was the gaze of the serpent upon the bird which he is about to devour. This is perhaps an unsuitable simile, but it occurred to me involuntarily as I saw the Judge watching Franz. I knew his suspicions of the young man, and knew that he was secretly trying to accumulate fresh grounds for it. I knew also that his desire was great to gather from Franz some word that could be used against him, and I fervently thanked my Creator that after going through two terms as a student of law, I had given up all legal aspirations and devoted myself to natural science. There is something positively detestable to me in the thought of a man like the Judge sacrificing all humanity in an eagerness to discover the traces of a crime. My discomfort increased from day to day as I observed the stealthy manner in which he watched Franz's every word and motion.

Sometimes I actually hated the Judge, but I reflected that I had no right to do so. He was simply fulfilling the duty of his office, and probably such fulfilment was most obnoxious to him; he certainly had before him a most unpleasant and arduous task.

As yet there had been no light thrown upon the mysterious crime in the Lonely House. The necessary papers had been sent to the court at Laibach, and there the matter rested for the present. The investigating Judge and the Attorney General had come to Luttach in person to convince themselves that there was no trace of the criminal. The stolen bonds and banknotes had not been found, and, in fact, identification of these would have been impossible, as there had been no registration of them.

Nor could the minutest search among the papers of the murdered man give any evidence as to the amount of his property. The Judge and the tradesman Weber, each of whom had formerly had dealings with old Pollenz and occasion to speak with him about his money affairs, maintained that the old man had kept a list of all bonds in his posses-

sion, and of his outstanding investments, in order that he might always be fully conscious of the amount of his wealth, but such a list was not among the papers left behind by the thief. The miserly old man had speculated with a kind of passion. He was in correspondence with several bankers in Vienna; no one could tell with how many. These bankers he commissioned partly by letter and partly through a Luttach firm of tradesmen, Weber & Meyer, as to the purchase and sale of various stocks. He excluded every one from all knowledge of his speculations, and never sold his stock through the same banking house that had purchased it for him. As no one knew how many banking houses he employed, it seemed quite hopeless to discover what stock and government bonds he had possessed, and this, of course, diminished the chances of the discovery of the murderer should he attempt to sell the papers.

It must have been a really humiliating reflection for Herr Foligno that within his district a crime should have been committed without any possibility of the discovery of the criminal. He might well fear that those

above him would accuse him of a want of acuteness, or of activity in the performance of his duties. His clear, excellently composed deposition had evidently not brought him the credit that it should have done in higher places. When the two officials from Laibach had made their visit to Luttach, they had put all their questions to the Clerk and not to himself.

“Perhaps I have been wrong,” he said to me after the visit of the two men from Laibach, “I ought to have required you to give me a sworn report of your encounter with Herr Franz Schorn in the forest near the Lonely House. I thought of doing so, but the same feeling which forbade me to do it upon the first discovery of the murder actuated me to-day and with renewed strength. Your meeting with him, and the wound in his hand, now entirely healed, are the only grounds of suspicion against him, and you yourself proved to me how insignificant they are by your simple remark that I, too, might be subjected to suspicion from the same causes. I assure you, Herr Professor, that I cannot be sufficiently grateful to you for preventing me

from taking a step which I might have repented forever. I do not deny that my suspicion of the man is even more deeply rooted now than it was then, but it behooves me to be all the more strict with myself, for hitherto I have discovered nothing which could justify me in accusing the man whom, nevertheless, I detest profoundly. Should I do so, all the world would believe that I was endeavouring to be rid of a hated rival."

I could not but admit that he was right. Circumstances were really most unfortunate for him. The Lonely House deserved its name now still more than formerly. It was utterly lonely. After the body of its owner had been interred in the graveyard of the village of Oberberg, the Captain had closed it. Anna and her old maid had come to Luttach; she had at last yielded to the persuasions of the Captain, the Burgomaster, and the doctor, and had accepted an asylum in the doctor's house. A couple of unused rooms were quickly furnished for herself and old Johanna. They did not live there as guests of the owner, but as lodgers. It was only with the stipulation that there should be no restriction

of her freedom that she had yielded to the wishes of her relatives, and the first use which she made of this freedom was to declare that Franz Schorn was her future husband, who should lead her to the altar at the expiration of her year of mourning. In vain did the Burgomaster, the Captain, and the doctor entreat the young girl to reserve for a time such a declaration. Anna was not to be persuaded.

“It is just because all are against him; just because all seem to hate him in spite of his noble, lofty nature, that I will be true to him. I have been betrothed to him for two years. As long as my father lived I could not declare this boldly against his will, but now I can do so.”

Anna's declaration produced a disagreeable impression in Luttach. The little social circle there was greatly scandalized, but even the loudest scandalmonger had to be silent, since Anna with delicate tact avoided all occasion for calumny. Her lover never visited her; her only times for seeing him were when he was invited to the house by its owner, the doctor, who had at first been really provoked at the girl's obstinacy, but who now found it

impossible to say enough of her truly enchanting disposition. He had always loved her, ever since she had been a little child, but had never dreamed of her becoming so charming, so tender and caressing. His wife, too, was perfectly delighted to have the lovely girl beneath her roof. He now comprehended perfectly how that stony-hearted miser, old Pollenz, had yielded to the charm of this girl, and, being quite unable to resist her, had not ventured to oppose her meeting Franz beneath the oak daily at noon, for fear of her forsaking him entirely. But, docile and amiable as Anna showed herself among her relatives and friends, the Burgomaster, the Captain, the doctor and his wife, she was correspondingly hard and repellent towards the Judge. From the Captain, with whom I had a daily gossip in the early morning in the garden, I learned that Herr Foligno still entertained a foolish hope of conquering the dislike which Anna felt for him. Several times since she had taken up her dwelling at the doctor's he had made an attempt to approach her, but had always been repulsed with signs of the greatest aversion. The Cap-

tain and the doctor had represented to her that she should at least treat him with conventional courtesy, but she had declared that for him she had no courteous, kindly word; she detested and despised him, not only because her father had once wished to force her to marry him, but because she had a firm conviction that he was at heart a wicked man. She would give no grounds for this belief, but she was quite sure it was justified.

The Captain and the doctor must have mentioned to others Anna's behaviour in this respect; it was known throughout Luttach. There was much laughing gossip in the little town about the Judge's unfortunate love. Every evening Mizka detailed to me some town tattle, which was sure to have for its subject pretty Anna and her two adorers. Perhaps it was not quite right that I should lend an ear to such downright gossip, but I do not deny that it interested me, and I could not make up my mind to interrupt the garrulous maid as she told me of all that was discussed in the town.

Though I had but very little sympathy for the Judge, I felt rather sorry for him; he

apparently suffered from the unfortunate circumstances in which he was placed. He had proved, too, that at bottom he was not a bad man by the consideration which he had shown for his inveterate enemy, against whom he endeavoured to harbour no suspicion. It was most unfortunate that he should bestow his affection upon a young girl who detested him. I could not excuse him for continuing to sue for her favour after she had shown him her dislike, and he exposed himself to the ridicule of the townfolk and fell in my esteem when every evening he sought to drown his woes by drinking immoderately.

Nevertheless I pitied him. To me he was all amiability and courtesy. He usually postponed his midday meal until I returned from my excursions and could partake of it with him. He took much interest in my collections, particularly in my botanical treasures, and really showed, for a layman, no little knowledge of the subject. If I had lit upon some rare plant, he would learn from me its locality, and in the afternoon would scramble about among the rocks and boast to me in the evening as he displayed the plucked flowers

of the result of his labours, and that he had discovered another spot rich in such treasures. If on the following morning I endeavoured to find according to his directions the place he had described, I became aware that it could be attained only by what was almost dangerous climbing. The ascent to a place where he told me I should find quantities of the *Ophrys Bertolini* was so hazardous that I might easily have come to grief had I not been a practised mountaineer. On returning, although I strictly followed his directions, I could not have rightly understood them, for I entered a perfect labyrinth of dangerous ravines. It was almost by a miracle that at last I found my way out of it and succeeded in descending by an unused break-neck path.

Exhausted beyond measure by such unexpected exertion, I returned to Luttach at noon and rehearsed to the Judge the danger through which I had passed.

He replied with a smile, "You must have missed the path in descending which I described to you. It is not without danger, but still not very bad. I am glad, however, that

you are now convinced of the difficulty which I had two weeks ago in plucking the *Ophrys Bertolini*. That is the spot where I found the flowers that I brought you. I still do not understand how you found the charming plants in a place easy of access."

So he had sent me upon this dangerous excursion just to rid himself of the imputation of bragging. This was very clear. I really did not thank him for it. I said nothing, but determined in future not to explore any of his wonderful localities. I am not such a passionate enthusiast for botany as to expose myself, for the sake of a beautiful flower, to the risk of breaking my neck.

CHAPTER IX.

AN EXPLORING PARTY.

ONE evening there was so full an assembly round the table in the inn that all the gentlemen with whom I had become acquainted in Luttach were present, with the exception of Franz Schorn. He, as the Burgomaster told us, had driven in the early morning to Görz to bring thence some expensive agricultural machines which he wished to employ on his farm. He had promised the Burgomaster to come to the inn late in the evening to give an account of his purchases, and he was expected to appear any minute.

Since the young man had of late been a constant attendant at the round table, the conversation which had formerly been quite lively with regard to him had ceased. It was all the more lively on this evening, and the subject of it was the purchases he had gone to Görz to make. Several of the men present were the owners of large estates. They at least knew something of agriculture, and yet

they were the very ones who expressed themselves as disapproving of the novelties which Franz was trying to introduce.

“He is always endeavouring to use something new-fangled and peculiar,” Herr Gunther, one of the richest of the land-owners in the county, declared. “These machines are probably useful enough in Germany, in countries where labour is perhaps very expensive, but they do not suit us here, where they are a ruinous innovation. We have so many poor people about us who want work, that it is a positive crime to deprive them of it by the use of machinery.”

“That is just why Schorn buys the machines,” another interposed, a man by the name of Mosaic. “He hates our poor Slavonic labourers and would like to be independent of them. He has probably heard that many of our best labourers have combined against him and will not work for the German. Where does he get the money he is spending upon such expensive machines?”

“The harvests for several years have not been so plentiful as to enable a farmer to accumulate much cash,” said another.

"Perhaps he buys on credit," said the notary, Dietrich.

"Not at all," rejoined the merchant, Meyer. "I have often offered him credit, but he has never accepted it. 'What I cannot buy with ready money I will go without; I will not burden myself with debt,' has always been his reply to me."

"He does not need to do so; he is always economical, and has money enough," remarked the shopkeeper, Weber. "As he was paying me yesterday for his clover seed, I saw that his pocket-book contained a roll of hundred-gulden notes."

"He has certainly spent a deal of money lately; he has purchased two splendid horses, and they were really not necessary, for the two which he gave in part payment to Schmelzigsohn were good enough. He is squandering money at present. People whisper queer things of him. In fact, they are beginning to whisper no longer, but to talk loudly, and before long what they say will be proclaimed in the market place."

"It certainly is strange that Schorn has so much money at his command. Before old

Pollenz was murdered he seemed to have very little."

For an instant profound silence followed the last remark of Mosaic's. A strange expression spread over the countenances of those present. The innuendo in the words just spoken made a most painful impression upon all. The Clerk was the first to recover himself. With an angry look at Mosaic, he said in a tone of harsh reproof:

"How dare you, Herr Mosaic, utter such an accusation against an absent member of our circle? I shall inform Herr Schorn of what you have said that he may call you to account for it."

Herr Mosaic changed color.

"Oh, pardon me, sir," he said, and his voice trembled; "you entirely misunderstood me. I have no idea of uttering an accusation against Herr Schorn. I only repeated the stupid talk of the townsfolk. Of course I attach no importance to it; it is not my fault if people will talk."

"You ought not to repeat such nonsensical gossip," the Clerk said angrily.

Hitherto the Judge had taken no part in

the conversation. He had sat silent drinking glass after glass of wine, but now he turned to the Clerk, and in a very odd tone said, with a glance toward me:

"You judge rather hastily, sir; you should remember that the voice of the people is the voice of God."

"Pardon me, Judge," cried the doctor; "in this case the despicable gossip is the voice of the devil; no honest man should repeat or defend it."

"So say I. 'Tis a cowardly, unworthy accusation!" exclaimed the Captain, and the Burgomaster nodded assent. "Franz is a rough, morose fellow, but a man of honour through and through, incapable of committing a crime."

"Besides," added the doctor, "very little understanding is necessary to perceive that he never could have committed the murder. Even if he had been a hard-hearted wretch quite capable of it, no suspicion of *this* crime could attach to him."

"Indeed!" said the Judge, contemptuously; "I really am curious to learn why no possible suspicion in this case could attach to Schorn."

“Upon my word, it is sad to think that I, an old doctor, understanding nothing of criminal law, should have to instruct a learned Judge as to what his simple, sound, good sense should teach him, but since it is so, since such ridiculous gossip has found no one in this circle to expose it as such, it must be. The murderer was certainly a man with whom old Pollenz was very intimate; Franz he hated like sin and held him to be his mortal enemy.

“When little Anna went to Luttach with old Johanna, her father locked the front door behind them, and, as always when resting at noon, withdrew to his own room and bolted himself in. Whoever wished to enter the house or to see its owner would be obliged either to break down the door or be admitted by old Pollenz himself. Now, no sensible human being could believe that the old man would have opened his door for Schorn, to allow himself to be murdered—for Franz Schorn, of whom he was afraid, of whom he always said, ‘Schorn will kill me one of these days.’ He would have drawn a double bolt on every door if Franz had asked for admit-

tance, but on this occasion he drew back the bolt and opened the door. There is no trace of any violence used in opening it, and a bolted door cannot be opened unless from within, or with violence; therefore I maintain that the murderer must have been an intimate friend of old Pollenz, and in no case can the slightest suspicion attach to Franz Schorn. I think I have now proved this clearly."

"Clear as sunlight; the legal profession loses a shining light in you, doctor," the Judge rejoined, his thin lips curled in a contemptuous smile. "After your lucid defense," he continued, "it seems to me incumbent upon us all to say not one word to Franz Schorn of our previous conversation; he would surely be deeply offended and insulted if he could believe that any one of us entertained the smallest doubt of his innocence. We must take it upon ourselves to discountenance the town gossip wherever we hear it, always taking care that the young man learns nothing of the rumours concerning him. The object of such rumours can never combat them himself. Should he try to do so, it would but strengthen belief in them; but we can have

many opportunities to silence slander. I hope you all agree with me, gentlemen."

All agreed. The doctor offered the Judge his hand in token of acknowledgment, and said with a kindly nod:

"You are a good fellow, after all, Judge, and I beg your pardon. It is fine of you to stand up so bravely for Franz, although you cannot endure him. I will not forget it of you."

That the Judge's words had produced their effect upon all present, even upon those most opposed to Schorn, was evident when the young man soon afterward entered the room; he was received with more cordiality and kindness than ever before; it really seemed as if Herr Gunther and Herr Mosic were trying by their courtesy to atone for the words spoken in his absence.

Franz was so pleasantly surprised by this friendly reception that he became far more amiable and genial than ever before. At the Burgomaster's request, he explained the new machines which he had bought in Görz and the use to which he intended to put them, not only for his own advantage, but hoping to im-

prove the agriculture of the entire Luttach valley by introducing them generally.

This excited a little war of words between him and the two land-owners, who declared themselves opposed to the introduction of new methods, but their opposition was expressed with so much moderation that Franz could not take offense.

And the Captain, who, as a good Conservative, was strongly opposed to the introduction of machinery in agricultural operations, sided with the land-owners.

“You mean well, Franz,” he said; “you would like to increase the prosperity of our valley; but with your cursed innovations you put the cart before the horse. You will never improve the labourer’s condition by depriving him of his means of subsistence.”

“These machines will not deprive the labourer of his work. On the contrary, they will give him an opportunity of working more effectually than has been possible for him hitherto. A more thorough cultivation of our fields and vineyards will create a fresh demand of labour, which will be better paid than ever.”

"Dreams, dreams, in which I have no faith," replied the Captain. "The manufacturers of these machines and the people who sell them have started these tales. When a machine undertakes the labour hitherto performed by man, the man sinks to the machine's level. In all great manufacturing towns the labouring class, with very few exceptions, is poverty-stricken and starving. Don't tell me of such innovations. We should count ourselves happy that here in the country we have hitherto been free from machinery."

"Nevertheless, perhaps because of this, our labourers here suffer the bitterest poverty."

"That is because the last few years have been poor ones. If the peasant's harvest fails and the vineyards do not flourish, the labourer can earn nothing. Your machines cannot improve his condition; they can only make it worse. The Herr Professor has given me an idea of what would improve the condition of our people here more than ought else."

I gazed at the Captain in surprise. I did not remember that I had ever said a word to him about the poverty of the labouring class

in the Luttach valley, or had ever mentioned any means whatever of improving their condition. He nodded to me with a gentle smile, and then continued:

“Yes, yes, Herr Professor, you do not recall how on the very first morning after your arrival among us we had a conversation which I remember well. Our valley should be opened to tourists; we are situated just between two important railways, not more than a league distant from each; we could be visited with the greatest facility, and where tourists are gathered together money is sure to circulate; all will be the gainers; the inns, the tradesfolk, those owning horses, who will hire out carriages; the laundresses, and even the labourers, who will be employed either as drivers or as guides for excursions among the mountains.”

“What talk is this, old friend?” the Burgo-master interrupted him with a laugh. “What have we here to attract tourists? They can make the ascent of Nanos very easily from Prayvalt, and our valley has really nothing more to show. It is quite wonderful that a naturalist, our Herr Professor, should have

visited us. Certainly none of those who travel for pleasure would ever contemplate coming hither."

"Therefore we must try to find something that will attract them. The Herr Professor called my attention to the fact that we live on from day to day without regard to our ignorance as to whether we do not possess a greater attraction for travellers than the Adelsberg Grotto. Does any one of us here present know how extensive are the caves which we possess, and whether they may not perhaps be finer than the grotto at Adelsberg? The only one among us who has interested himself about them is, if I do not mistake, Franz Schorn, and he has done very little in the way of exploration. How is it, Franz; am I not right?"

"It is true that I have done very little in the way of exploration. I penetrated furthest into the cave in the grove of the Rusina. It is a laborious piece of work. I lost all desire to penetrate further; it seemed useless."

"The Herr Professor thinks differently. Do you still desire to attempt to explore one of these caves, Herr Professor? I was

anxious to offer you my assistance in so doing some time ago, but this horrible murder has occupied our minds to the exclusion of every other thought."

The Captain's proposal was very welcome to me. In my excursion on the forenoon of this very day I had gazed with much interest in the grove of the Rusina, at the dark opening among gigantic blocks of granite. I had an intense desire to explore it, but prudence called a halt. Overheated as I was in climbing about the mountains, I would not expose myself to the danger to which the cold, damp interior of the cave would expose me, and, besides, it would have been very foolish to attempt any exploration without companions, for the slightest slip might prove fatal. No one would ever have looked for me in the cave; if not killed, I might have starved before I was discovered.

Such considerations at the time forbade gratifying my desire to explore the cave, but it awoke again within me at the Captain's offer; it pleased me that it should be so entirely voluntary. I thanked him and declared that I would gladly take part in an explora-

tion of the cave whenever he should arrange it.

“Bravo! Then let us set to work early to-morrow morning and begin with the cave in the grove of the Rusina. You will join us, Franz?”

“Gladly. I only fear that we shall not get far. There is a deep abyss not many yards from the entrance.”

“How deep is it?”

“I do not know. I threw a lighted match into it, but it was quickly extinguished; and a stone which I cast down soon struck some rock and I could not see where it lay. I took no pains to explore further.”

“Then we will try to do so to-morrow. Let us take with us a couple of sturdy fellows, who can carry torches, some lanterns and a sufficient length of strong rope, with perhaps a ladder or two. I will take with me some magnesium wire, which will give us a brilliant light in the depths.”

Franz agreed. We discussed the interesting expedition further, and decided that we would start at seven o'clock the next morning.

“May I make one of your party?” the

Judge asked, when we had completed our arrangements. Franz Schorn started and regarded the speaker with a searching glance. Evidently he was about to refuse decidedly, but thought better of it, bit his lip, and, with a slight gesture of his hand, referred the matter to me. I cannot say that the proposal was agreeable to me. I was surprised that the Judge should be willing to take part in an expedition to which Franz Schorn was, to a certain degree, the guide. I feared some unpleasant encounter between the two men and I should have liked to refuse. This, however, courtesy forbade. The Judge had always been so amiable and obliging in his behaviour to me that it was impossible for me to decline his company.

He noticed that I hesitated a moment, and, probably guessing whence such hesitation proceeded, continued with a smiling look at Franz Schorn:

“I am very much interested in our Ukraine caves, and I have already visited a number of them. The cave in the grove of the Rusina is not unfamiliar to me. I have not explored it to the extent of which Herr Schorn tells us,

but I am familiar with the entrance and would like to penetrate its depths. Of course, I voluntarily acquiesce in the intelligent guidance of Herr Schorn, who will take command of our expedition. You would oblige me very much, Herr Professor, by your permission to accompany you."

I could not but accord it. It was impossible to do otherwise. The Judge thanked me, as he did Schorn and the Captain, so courteously that I was half inclined to suspect his sincerity. The prospect of this expedition seemed to delight him. He suddenly became talkative and showed an uncommon amiability to Schorn, although the young man met his advances with monosyllabic replies. His attempt to make himself acceptable to him was not happy; his cheerfulness seemed forced; his friendliness assumed; his gaiety feverish. In his usual attitude at the table, looking gloomily into his wineglass, he impressed me very unfavourably, but to-day, when he was talkative and gay, I was still more unfavourably impressed.

I had a very strange feeling with regard to the Judge. I could not but acknowledge that

he was a good, honourable man. He had shown this abundantly; but I felt a vague, instinctive aversion to him, which, however I struggled against it, increased the more I knew him.

I was uncomfortable in his society that evening; therefore I rose from my place earlier than usual and called Mizka to light me to my room. To my surprise, the Judge followed my example, although he had just ordered another measure of wine.

"I will go with you, Herr Professor," he said, and he accompanied me without drinking his wine. "To-morrow, then, at seven o'clock, Herr Schorn."

As he spoke he offered his hand to Schorn, but the young man ignored it.

"It is to the Herr Professor or to the Captain that you owe permission to accompany us," Schorn said, with cool contempt. "I have not agreed to it. You and I have nothing in common."

"Perhaps you are wrong, Herr Schorn. I may convince you of this to-morrow. I willingly submit myself to your guidance. Good-night."

His features wore a detestable sneer as he uttered these words, and, bowing to the rest of the company, he followed me.

Upstairs on the landing I would have bidden him good-night, but he said:

“I followed you, Herr Professor, because I want to speak a few words with you alone. Allow me to go into your room with you. I’ll not detain you long.”

Of course I invited him to enter and to take a place on the old straight-backed sofa, curious to learn what he could have to say to me. When Mizka, after having lighted the candles, left the room, he sprang up, went to the door and opened it to convince himself that she was not listening, and then opened the door leading to the adjoining room to make sure that no one was there. Then he returned to me, and in a voice trembling with agitation said:

“I pray you, Herr Professor, to give me at once, now, your report of meeting Franz Schorn in the neighbourhood of the Lonely House.”

I was startled. I had not expected this demand. Surprise made me speechless for

a moment. I could only ejaculate "Herr Foligno!"

"I understand your surprise, your dismay," he continued. "Believe me, it has cost me a struggle to resolve to make this request, but it must be. I may have neglected my duty in postponing it so long. Now, when my suspicions have become almost a certainty, I can wait no longer. I am compelled to collect all the grounds for it that I possess, and among them belongs your meeting with him near the Lonely House. The paper must be sent to the Attorney General at Laibach. It must be, Herr Professor; you cannot refuse me. Every man of honour is bound to support the authorities in the investigation of crime. You could not wish to shield a criminal from the rigour of the law."

"Most certainly not; but I am more than firmly convinced that Franz Schorn is no murderer. You yourself, scarcely an hour ago, admitted the proofs of his innocence adduced by the doctor."

"Did you not perceive that my words were ironical? I was obliged to change the subject of the conversation. Franz Schorn must not

be warned by his friends. He must believe himself safe from discovery, or he will betake himself to flight, for which the money gained by his crime gives him abundant opportunity. Trieste is not far off, and a guide thither is quickly found. I was obliged to conceal from him the knowledge that I have discovered his crime. I put force upon myself to control my abhorrence of him. This very night I must complete the full report showing forth all the evidence against him, and in this I must include your meeting with him near the Lonely House. An official will take the paper to Laibach and deliver it in person; then the Attorney General must decide whether the evidence it contains be sufficient to warrant Schorn's arrest. I am myself perfectly convinced of his guilt. I ought perhaps to arrest him on my own responsibility, but I will not expose myself to the reproach of acting from personal hostility. I shall watch him narrowly to prevent his flight, and therefore I begged to be allowed to join your cave exploration. His arrest I will leave to the Attorney General in Laibach. Thus I have explained to you frankly the grounds for my action, and I

pray you to give me the report for the protocol, which you promised me a week ago. This report should consist, in order to save yourself and myself unpleasant after inquiries, of the declaration that to your meeting with Schorn you attached no importance in the beginning, but since you have learned that the voice of the people pronounce him the murderer you hold it to be your duty to mention seeing him in the forest. You might add that you hold this meeting to be of no importance and that you are most unwilling to arouse a suspicion of the young man, but that, nevertheless, you feel it your duty to tell of your encounter with him. I think such a report cannot outrage your sense of justice."

"It does not accord with my sense of justice to admit a suspicion which I think false. If I make my report now, it will look as though I shared this suspicion. The Attorney General would so interpret it, even though I declared the contrary. I ought to have made the report immediately after the discovery of the murder. You prevented my doing so then, and now I will not make it until

I see at least the possibility of other grounds for it."

"It is the duty of the Attorney General, not yourself, to judge of the importance of your evidence," Herr Foligno replied sternly. "It is the duty of the private individual to impart to the proper authorities every circumstance that may be connected with a crime. Of course you know that."

"It is not his duty," I said angrily, "if his inmost conviction is that the circumstance he relates has no connection whatever with the crime, although it may serve to arouse suspicion. If what you maintain be correct, I ought also to advise the Attorney General that you yourself were in the neighbourhood of the Lonely House on that morning and that I found your pocket handkerchief where you had been plucking *Ophrys Bertolini*."

Herr Foligno shot such a look of rage at me from beneath his black brows that I started in terror. I had no idea of affecting him so deeply by my words. In a voice trembling with anger, which he vainly strove to control, he said:

"Then you would tell the Attorney General

a falsehood. I have told you that I did not pluck the flowers in the neighbourhood of the Lonely House, but at a great distance from it, and in a spot difficult to find, and that my handkerchief was by accident where you picked it up. Is it possible that you do not believe me, although I have told you all this distinctly?"

He probably read in my face that I was not convinced of the truth of this statement, for he continued in a sharp, angry tone:

"You doubt, in spite of my words. Perhaps you entertain the possibility of my having some connection with the crime——"

"What folly, Herr Foligno!" I cried, interrupting him. "I mentioned you and your pocket handkerchief only to contradict your assertion that it was my duty to tell of an insignificant experience. If I ought to report having seen Franz Schorn near the Lonely House, I also ought to report the finding of your handkerchief under the same circumstances."

"If you really consider this your duty, I shall not gainsay you," he replied darkly, not lifting his eyes from the ground. "It is no

affair of mine. My task is to send this very night my deposition, containing an account of your meeting with Franz Schorn, to the proper authorities either with or against your consent. I may find myself in a very unpleasant position and even imperil my office when I relate that I myself advised you to withhold your report concerning Schorn, but personal considerations must yield to my sense of duty. I had thought, Herr Professor," he continued, in a more friendly tone, finding me still silent, "that you would not willingly thus embarrass me. Believe me, I would not so insist upon your evidence were I not thoroughly and firmly convinced of the young man's guilt. To show you how highly I esteem you, what implicit confidence I place in your honour and silence, I will tell you, although scarcely warranted in so doing, of the results of my laborious investigations during the last few weeks. You yourself will then be convinced of your duty. It is a hard task for me to make these revelations to you, for not only do they militate against Franz Schorn, but against one who has been very dear to my heart, and for whom to-day, in spite of my

better judgment, I feel warm affection; but it must be; you shall hear all."

"Proceed; you may rely upon my discretion."

I waited for what he had to say with intense eagerness. For a few moments he sat silent, with downcast looks; then he began, not once looking at me as he spoke:

"It is difficult to indicate the precise moment at which suspicions of Schorn were aroused within me. You yourself know of his bitter enmity towards old Pollenz, whose death he could not but desire, since it alone would bring him the fulfilment of his dearest wish. You know of his being near the Lonely House immediately after the murder. You know also of the wound in his hand, to account for which he told of having grasped a double-edged knife as it fell from where he had left it. His reluctance to show the wound to the doctor, and, more than all else, his sudden accession of wealth after the crime, accuses him loudly. He has made purchases which would have been impossible with his own unassisted means. All these grounds of suspicion the doctor thought to annihilate by

his acute reasoning, showing that old Pollenz himself could not possibly have admitted Schorn and that the murderer had evidently entered the house without any violent breaking in of the door. How is this to be accounted for? Unfortunately, the explanation is only too clear. Fräulein Anna Pollenz, when officially examined, as well as in her words to the Captain and to the doctor, portrayed a life in her father's house absolutely opposed to reality. She maintained that her father loved her most tenderly; that he was always kind and gentle to her, and that even her connection with the hated Schorn and her refusal to give me her hand had produced no change in his demeanour toward her. Anna's words were universally believed. Who could doubt who looked into her eyes and acknowledged their spell? To see her is to love her. She wins all hearts at once. Every one believes her; every one trusts her; and nevertheless every word that she spoke is false. For years the Lonely House has witnessed terrible scenes between father and daughter. The old man abused the lovely child outrageously because she would not obey him. Un-

fortunately I myself was often the cause of this abuse, although I declared continually to old Pollenz that I never would claim Anna's hand unless she bestowed it upon me voluntarily; unless I succeeded in winning the young girl's love. The old fellow was a rough, heartless, violent man; a coward to those stronger than himself, brutal to those who were weaker. He locked his daughter up; he half starved her; he beat her so that she escaped from him bleeding. For years he never spoke a kind word to her. He had unbounded confidence in me; he even angrily complained to me of her disobedience. I myself have witnessed frightful scenes, and on several occasions prevented him with all my physical strength from maltreating the beautiful, unfortunate child in my presence."

"Frightful!" I exclaimed. The dreadful picture which the narrator unfolded before me filled me with horror.

"Beside myself, there is one other human being who is aware of the family life in the Lonely House. Old Johanna was a witness of the maltreatment which the unhappy girl suffered daily in our presence; in the pres-

ence of others the old man assumed a kind, mild demeanour toward his child; old Johanna suffered almost as much as Anna from the brutality of her master. She would long ago have left him if she had not been detained by tender affection for her mistress. After what you have just heard you may judge with what amazement I was filled upon learning after the death of old Pollenz that Anna had described her relations with her father as happy, peaceful, and loving, and that old Johanna in the final examination, had confirmed all that Anna said. I pondered long to discover what grounds Anna could have for such a false representation of the actual circumstances and why she should suddenly develop such inconceivable hatred for me, who had so often protected her from ill treatment. When at last I suspected the true cause I found it difficult of belief. I alone can expose the tissue of lies which she has woven around herself. I alone cannot be won over to testify to her truth, as she has won over old Johanna, who would perjure herself willingly for her darling, and Anna needs such falsehoods. It is almost impossible to believe that

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the daughter, driven to madness and despair by daily ill treatment, herself opened the locked doors for her lover. Spare me further words, Herr Professor. My reason becomes confused when I reflect on a deed so horrible. Ever since this solution became clear to me, sleep is banished. I toss restlessly throughout the night. My thoughts dwell perpetually in the Lonely House. At times I have feared that I should become insane. The struggle raging within me during these last few days is indescribable. I loved Anna with all my heart. I love her still, and, although it is madness, I shall love her to my last breath. Neither her crime nor the hatred which she displays towards me can kill this insane love within me, and fate has ordained that I should be the inexorable judge, the dread accuser of her lover, in ruining whom I ruin her also; but I must do my duty, let my heart bleed as it may."

He had finished. The narrative had agitated him fearfully; he trembled in every limb; his eyes glowed as with fever. I was scarcely less moved than he. His words had torn the veil from my eyes; I could now see

the fearful scenes in the Lonely House clearly, and how they had led to the final deed. I was ineffably sad. Great as was my detestation of the horrible crime, I could not but pity deeply the unfortunate child whom despair had maddened. Detestation, horror and pity by turns filled my heart. I could put myself in the place of the unhappy man who had just revealed to me his innermost soul.

How long we confronted each other in silence I cannot say. We were both too deeply moved to give expression in words to our feelings. Herr Foligno recovered himself first. His voice no longer trembled as he asked, after a long pause:

“Will you now sign the report which I will write out for you?”

“Yes.”

I brought him paper, pen and ink. He quickly took down the evidence I had to give, as he had before required that I should give it, and then read aloud what he had written. I had no objection to offer, and signed it.

He arose and held out his hand in farewell.

“I have another terrible night before me,” he said. “To-morrow a messenger must take

this early to Laibach, and a hard day will follow a weary night for both of us. It will not be easy for you, Herr Professor, to make one to-morrow of Franz Schorn's party to the cave without allowing him to perceive your detestation of him."

"I cannot; I shall excuse myself on the plea of illness."

"No, Herr Professor, you must not do this. Schorn will surely learn through Mizka that I came with you to your room; he might suspect something. A criminal of his calibre is on the watch for the merest trifle which can arouse suspicion of his discovery. You, too, Herr Professor, have a hard duty to perform, but it must be done. You must be one of the party, as I shall be. Neither the Captain nor Schorn must dream of what the near future will bring forth. I trust to your honour, and I know that I do not trust in vain."

"You may rely upon me; I will control myself."

With another pressure of the hand we separated.

CHAPTER X.

AN ACCIDENT?

As I tossed restlessly in bed I heard above me, as on the first night after the murder, the pacing to and fro of the Judge. A magnetic connection seemed to exist between us, causing me to think what he thought, and to feel what he felt. The same terrible images which banished sleep from his eyes were present before mine. I heard the church clock strike hour after hour, and only with the first glimmer of dawn did I enjoy a short slumber.

At five o'clock I awakened. My first thoughts dwelt upon what the Judge had told me the evening before. It now appeared to me in quite a different light. I was more composed. The nervous agitation which had then possessed me had vanished. I could reflect upon what I had heard. As the Judge had spoken in his excitement, what he said had such an effect upon me that it all seemed to me absolute verity without need of proof,

but now doubts sprang up, and a clearer understanding demanded its rights.

Had Herr Foligno really divulged to me unvarnished facts, which convinced me of the guilt of Schorn and of his betrothed, as his accomplice? No! He had accumulated evidence as the doctor had done. The only fact was that Anna had not adhered to the truth in describing her relations with her father, and was it not natural that the daughter should try to clear her father's memory of all evil? It was very natural that her filial affection should awaken after her father's terrible death; that she should forget everything that had distressed her in their relations—his harshness, even his maltreatment—and remember only his love. And for this was she to be accused as an accomplice in an accursed crime?

I was ashamed of my credulity. Might not Herr Foligno be governed by prejudice even to misunderstanding the relations between father and daughter? A harsh word spoken by the father to Anna in his presence might appear to him an intolerable offence, while Anna might scarcely notice it.

I really could not comprehend my credulity of the previous evening, or how I could have been led by the Judge's excitement to regard as facts the arguments he had adduced.

And if Anna were not guilty, where were there grounds for suspicion of Franz Schorn? I repented having signed the deposition and having promised to be silent with regard to it; but I had given my promise, and it must be kept. Perhaps, after all, it was as well, for my report would elicit a judicial investigation of all grounds for suspicion of Franz Schorn, who could be acquitted of all imputations only by a thorough examination which could clear him from every suspicion entertained of him by his fellow-townsmen.

All these considerations soothed me. I could contemplate the expedition which I had arranged with Franz Schorn for to-day without aversion. It was rather disagreeable to know that the report signed by me was already on its way to Laibach, while I was one of a party of pleasure, all friends of the young man; but I would not ponder on this; it was irrevocable.

Soon after six o'clock I went down to the

garden to take my morning cup of coffee, and there I found the Captain and Franz awaiting me to discuss the details for our excursion. Franz was full of life and animation. I had never seen him so gay, so happy. There was no trace of the sullen expression which sometimes clouded his handsome face. His morning greeting was so cordial that I felt ashamed indeed as I shook his proffered hand. This pleasant, happy young man guilty of a murder? It was folly, nay, it was wicked to hold any such idea for a minute.

He had early completed every necessary preparation for the excursion we were about to make. The Captain and I had really nothing to provide; even the magnesium wire had been bought at the druggist's. Two stout labourers, who could speak German, were ready to accompany us, each of them provided with a thick, pointed staff and a long rope, not too thick, but very strong. Half a dozen pitch torches Schorn had procured from the fire department, and a lantern for every member of the party. In addition, the men carried after us two short, strong ladders.

On the stroke of seven Herr Foligno entered the garden. He greeted Schorn politely; the Captain and myself cordially. He looked ill and worn. I had never seen his sallow features so expressionless, but his dark eyes shone with feverish excitement.

We began our walk. The people who met us looked after us in surprise as we strode through the streets of Luttach. Apparently they could not understand how two men, known to be such bitter enemies as Herr Foligno and Franz Schorn, should be walking so peaceably side by side.

At the furthest end of the town we descended to the bed of the Rusina. In early spring, when the snow melts quickly upon Nanos and when heavy rainfalls create hundreds of little brooks from the mountains, the Rusina dashes along in wild fury; but after a drought it is almost dried up, and is only a shallow rill of water trickling between the stones of its rocky bed. We could walk along it without wetting our feet. It was not very agreeable walking, but it was the nearest way to the grove, which we reached after scarcely ten minutes.

Here, in the centre of this grove, consisting of scarcely a hundred huge oaks, there is a pile of mighty rocks; large blocks, covered with luxuriant green moss, are heaped together in a confused mass, in which is an opening, black and forbidding, about the height of a man, which forms the entrance to the cave we were to explore. Here we halted and consulted. It was decided that we should enter in single file, Franz Schorn first as our guide. I was to follow him. Herr Foligno came after me, and the Captain was last. Our two porters closed the little procession. The lanterns were lighted and each of us took one.

We entered the cave, which was at first tolerably spacious; into it daylight penetrated, making a dim twilight. About four or five yards above us arched a roof of black, moist stone. The ground beneath, descending rather precipitously, was covered with small fragments of rock which had apparently fallen from the roof, loosened by the dampness. There was no trace of the beautiful stalactites for which the Adelsberg Grotto is so famous. The light of our lanterns was quite sufficient to reveal clearly the part of

the cave where we stood and the path leading down to the depths. A few yards from the entrance the cave narrowed. There was room between the walls of rock for only two men to walk abreast; and indeed the walking was extremely difficult, because of the slippery scales of rock with which the floor was strewn.

Forward! We walked, or, rather, we scuffled, downwards, in danger at every step of falling on the slippery stones. After a few minutes our path grew easier; it no longer descended; although still strewn with fragments of rock, the danger of slipping was less. We had more room. The walls retreated and vanished beyond the circle of light cast by our lanterns, which could no longer illumine the roof of the cave arching above us.

“‘Here it resembles a cathedral,’ the Adelsberger guides would say, if they were here,” said Franz Schorn with a laugh, stopping and raising his lantern. “How high this dome is I have never before with my insufficient light been able to discover, and just because I had insufficient light I ventured but little further into the cave.”

“You reached an abyss which prevented

your further progress; at least you told us so yesterday," said the Judge.

"True. It is only a few minutes' walk from here. If we go through the cathedral and turn a little to the left, we shall reach the only outlet which leads further among the rocks. It is a very narrow, rocky way, suddenly ending in a sheer abyss. It is for us to discover to-day whether it is possible to be lowered by a rope into its depths and to find sufficient foothold below to enable us to continue our exploration. When, four or five years ago, I last entered the cave, quite alone, I could go no further, and so I returned from this spot."

"Must we turn to the left?" asked the Judge. "You are mistaken; we must turn to the right; to the left the cave is completely blocked by a heap of rocky fragments."

Franz Schorn regarded the speaker with surprise, bethought himself a moment, and then exclaimed:

"True, you are right. I remember now that I found a heap of rocks on my left, and then turned to the right to find an outlet. But how did you know this, Herr Foligno?"

One of the two porters laughed aloud, and answered in the Judge's stead with some words in Slavonic, which seemed to surprise the Captain as well as Schorn.

"What, Herr Foligno, you were here in the cave a week ago, with Rassak, and ventured as far as the abyss, and never told us anything about it yesterday?" exclaimed the Captain.

"I told you that I had entered the cave, but had not gone far. I do not talk much of such trifles," he replied irritably, adding:

"Shall we not light a couple of torches to see how high the roof is?"

The torches were lighted, but did not suffice to reveal the height of the cave. Only when the magnesium light flamed up and cast its dazzling radiance upwards did we perceive for a few moments the rocky roof some twenty yards above us.

"This is gruesome," said the Captain, with a long breath, as the brilliant light was extinguished and the darkness around us seemed deeper and blacker than before. "We can now understand how the floor beneath our feet is so covered with fragments of rock.

Evidently large pieces fall from the roof and are broken into a hundred bits below. Look, Herr Foligno; the stones just here show traces of having been but lately broken. At any minute another fragment might fall and be the death of us."

"Yes, such an exploration is not without danger," the Judge replied with a sneer. "But let us proceed, gentlemen. The shorter the time spent here beneath this roof the less danger is there that we shall be injured by a falling rock. Let us go on, in the same order as hitherto. You go first, Herr Schorn."

"Since you visited the cave only a week ago, you had better act as guide, Herr Foligno."

"No, I refuse. I expressly stated yesterday that I should be entirely guided by you, and I repeat it. Therefore, pray, Herr Schorn, go before us; I will follow with the Herr Professor."

Schorn made no further objection. We pursued our way, keeping to the right, and entered the narrow opening between the rocks, which seemed the only means by which to penetrate further into the cave. It was

narrower than any path hitherto. It would have been impossible for two men to walk in it abreast, but there was more than enough room, when in single file. Our lanterns and the torches of the porters cast sufficient light to show us a gentle ascent in front and to enable us to proceed free from all risk of danger.

"We have reached the abyss," Schorn said, halting after a few moments. "Here we can go no further, and if we cannot find, after being lowered by a rope, another opening, our exploration party has reached its limits. The abyss appears to be not only sheer, but the rock upon which we stand overhangs it somewhat. I will lie flat on the ground and look down. Perhaps I shall succeed in finding an outlet, but I must have a brighter light than that of the lanterns. Give me one of the torches, Herr Professor."

A torch was passed from hand to hand; I gave it to Schorn, who laid himself flat on the ground, and, leaning over the abyss as far as possible, endeavoured to cast into it the light of the torch. As he lay there I had a view of the depths, but it gave me little hope

for the continuance of our exploration. The red light of the torch was sufficient to show me a black wall rising twelve or fifteen feet on the opposite side of the abyss. It seemed to bar all progress, giving no hint of any outlet. A few feet above our heads the smoke of the torches hung in a cloud, which found no egress from the cave.

"Beneath us, scarcely twenty feet below, there is firm footing," cried Schorn, "and, if I do not mistake, the cave then leads to the right among the rocks; but I must have a brighter light."

He handed the torch back to me and took a piece of magnesium wire from his pocket. The next moment the cave as far as we could overlook it was illumined as by an electric light.

"A happy discovery; we can go on," cried Schorn, delighted, as the light was extinguished. "I can assure you, gentlemen," he said, rising, "that the first difficulty is almost without danger, and easy to overcome."

We crowded about him; even the two porters were determined not to lose a word of his description.

Beneath the overhanging rock, at a depth of scarcely fifteen or twenty feet, there was a firm footing, a platform of stone quite broad enough to give standing room for at least five or six men, and from this platform a way was distinguishable on the right through a narrow opening in the rocks.

"Now you see, Herr Foligno, I was right a week ago. You would not believe me, but so it is," exclaimed Rassak, one of the porters, exultantly, speaking German.

"Who asked your opinion?" the Judge said harshly.

"Did Rassak, then, discover the continuance of the cave?" said the Captain.

"Well, yes," the Judge replied irritably. "It seems at present that he was probably right. He lay down on the ground and let down a lantern by a rope, and then declared that the cave had a further outlet. I lay down after him and looked down, but I could see no opening. I did not believe him, and it was partly to convince myself whether or not he was correct that I offered to accompany you to-day. I could not explore it myself then; I had no rope strong enough to lower

me to the platform below, which might have been done without danger."

"Not quite without danger, at least for the first to attempt it," Schorn remarked calmly, "but it is not great. It needs a little swing on the rope to reach the platform, but when one man obtains firm footing there, the rest is easy. I will be let down first, and can draw the rest toward me. The porters must stay here, that they may pull us up when we return."

"But it seems to me a very perilous undertaking," said the Captain anxiously. "We cannot expose our Herr Professor to such danger. If the rope breaks before he reaches the platform, or if he should be seized with giddiness, he would fall into a bottomless abyss."

"I will guarantee the strength of the rope," said Franz Schorn.

"And I that I shall suffer no dizziness; I do not know the sensation." I was so keen for the continuance of our exploration that I was almost irritated by the Captain's anxiety on my behalf. The danger would have to be far greater than it was to deter me from

further progress. Hitherto I had found no trace of a cave beetle; there had been nothing living among the bald black rocks. Only at a greater depth could I hope to satisfy my passion for collecting.

“If the Captain thinks the danger too great, he can remain with the porters. I shall be glad to follow the Herr Professor,” said the Judge; whereupon the Captain turned upon him angrily, declaring that he was not thinking of danger for himself, but for the old gentleman who was their guest in Luttach; since, however, the Herr Professor wished to go, he himself should surely not remain behind.

Thus we determined to proceed. Franz Schorn gave us the necessary directions. He wished us to put the rope around us and to hold it firmly when we were lowered. These directions were not necessary in my case; I have made use of rope so often with my guides among the glaciers, and have so frequently been let down from the rocks to obtain some rare plant, that I was quite familiar with its use. There seemed to be no possible peril here, even for Franz Schorn,

for four of us would hold the rope and we could lower him very gradually for the short distance to the platform below, making any great swing of the rope impossible. The two porters could easily lower the Captain, who was to be the last of us to follow.

Schorn arranged the rope so that he could place himself in the loop; he fastened a lantern to it, and then advanced to the edge of the rocks, seated himself, and, still holding to the irregular surface he slowly lowered himself, while we, holding the rope, paid it out inch by inch. I followed him to the edge, but I did not look down, because I concentrated all my attention upon the paying out of the rope.

After scarcely a minute we heard him call from below:

“Halt! I am all right. Draw the rope up again.”

I laid myself flat on the ground and looked over the edge of the platform, which was now illuminated by the lantern which Schorn held. It was light enough for me to see the young man distinctly as he stood quite comfortably not far below me. I could also discern the

black opening to the right, the continuation of the cave.

"Follow me, Herr Professor," Schorn called up. "Do just as I did; there is no danger; seat yourself in the loop and as soon as you are lowered, I will drag you to me. A dozen men beside us could find room on this platform."

I did as he directed and seated myself in the loop, but as I was about to swing clear of the outer edge of the rock to follow Schorn's example, my heart suddenly gave a leap. For a moment horror overcame me as I looked into the depths below; I hesitated to cast myself loose.

"Are you afraid, Herr Professor?" The Judge stood immediately behind me, regarding me with a sneer. His eyes gleamed strangely as he leaned over me.

There is no greater folly than to expose oneself to a danger out of fear of being called a coward. I have often declared this, but at that moment, old man as I am, I committed this folly.

"Hold the rope firmly; I will let myself down," I replied.

“Have no fear, we will hold it fast.”

I hovered above the abyss and was slowly lowered. I had almost reached the platform when I heard above me a strange creaking; at the next moment I knew I was falling, but a strong arm was thrown around me and Franz Schorn and I staggered and fell on the platform. Just then I heard a scream from above.

“Great God!” exclaimed the voice of the Judge. “The rope has broken; the Professor has fallen into the abyss!”

This was all the work of a moment. I tried to stand up, but I could not; my right ankle was terribly painful. Franz Schorn, who had fallen with me, was quickly on his feet.

“I never will believe that the rope broke,” he whispered. He seized it and examined it by the light of his lantern on the ground; mine had been broken and extinguished in my fall.

“It was half cut through before it broke,” he said in a dull tone. “That scoundrel, Folligno, has tried to plunge you into the abyss.”

Hastily taking a knife from his breast pocket he cut off the end of the rope and handed it to me.

“Keep this,” he whispered. “You may perhaps need it for proof that the rascal tried to murder you.”

I heard his words, but I did not understand him. My thoughts were in wild confusion; I was still half stunned by my fall. Mechanically I followed his directions and put the piece of rope in my pocket. Only gradually did I clearly understand in what danger I had been, and that Franz Schorn had ventured his own life to rescue mine. It was almost a certainty that I should drag him down to the abyss, but he had seized me as I fell, and at the risk of his life had pulled me back to the platform.

“You have saved my life——”

He interrupted me. “Don’t speak of it. We all help one another as well as we can. What we have to think of now is how to reach the rock above us without injury.”

He suddenly paused, as from above came the voice of the Judge:

“Thank God! The accident is not so bad as I feared. I can see the Herr Professor and Herr Schorn on the platform below. Are you hurt, Herr Professor?”

"I believe my right ankle is broken," I called back.

"Good heavens! What shall we do?"

"Why, of course," Schorn replied, "you must lower the second rope to pull us up. I beg, however, that Rassak may be the first man, Bela the second, the Captain the third, and that you, Herr Foligno, do not touch the rope. It might break in your hands a second time. I will not trust you with the Herr Professor's life or my own."

The Judge made no reply. For a moment all was silent, and then the Captain called down to us:

"What nonsense you are talking, Franz! You have mortally offended the Judge. He had nothing to do with the accident. He is in despair that the Herr Professor should be injured."

"His anger is of no consequence," Franz answered. "He promised me to submit to my orders, and I insist upon his not touching the rope again."

A long discussion began. The Captain was seriously angry at the offence Franz had given to the Judge, whom he attempted to

soothe, but Franz declared positively that he would wait with me on the platform for hours until Rassak could procure two other men rather than trust himself and me to a rope passing through the hands of the Judge. He said nothing of his suspicion that the rope had been partly cut through, and, therefore, the Captain thought his demand unjustifiable and prompted solely by hatred of his foe. He was indignant, but he was obliged to comply with the young man's demand, in order that I might be relieved from my most unpleasant situation as soon as possible. He promised that Rassak should be stationed close to the edge and that the Judge should take no part in the pulling up of the rope. While the Captain and Franz were discussing the matter I had examined my ankle, and, to my great joy, found that it was not broken, but had been severely sprained by my fall. It was excessively painful, but I could move it; I could even stand with Franz's assistance. Some moments passed, and then Schorn's name was called from above.

"Is that you, Rassak?"

"Yes."

“Where is the Judge?”

“Herr Foligno has gone back to the dome alone. He is to wait there until we come.”

“Lower the second rope to me; I wish to examine it.”

After a minute the rope hovered above us; Franz seized it, unfastened it from the other rope to which it was tied and examined it narrowly by the light of the lantern.

“It is sound and uninjured. I feared the rascal might have cut this through secretly; but he has not dared to do so. Now we can allow ourselves to be pulled up without delay.”

Rassak was ordered to pull the rope up again and then to throw down to us the broken one. This was done. Franz cut a piece from the broken end with his knife and gave it to me, saying:

“Keep it with the one you have, Herr Professor.”

After which he busied himself with preparations for my rescue. These he made with great care, trying the strength of the rope which he tied about me and of the loop in which I seated myself. Although I protested

and declared that I could now care for myself perfectly, he used the piece of old rope to keep me steady as I ascended, holding it firmly below to prevent any swaying of the other. Thus I reached the top of the rock in safety, although my short ascent had caused almost intolerable pain in my sprained ankle, and when Rassak received me in his powerful arms above, I could not move the injured foot. I tried to stand up and to walk, but it was quite impossible. Rassak was forced to take me on his broad shoulders and carry me back to the dome. The Captain and Bela carried their lanterns in advance; without their light he could scarcely have made his way along the narrow path through the rocks. Franz was obliged to wait on the platform for some minutes before being drawn up.

We found the Judge seated on a block of stone at the entrance of the rocky way beneath the dome. He sprang up as we approached.

"Thank God, Herr Professor!" he cried, throwing his arm kindly about me for my support, as Rassak placed me on the ground. He pushed aside several large stones to make

a comfortable bed for me. He even took off his coat and put it upon the rock that I might have a softer resting place. He was full of kind attention, far exceeding the Captain, who congratulated me in a few simple words and expressed his joy upon my escape; nevertheless I had a strange sensation, akin to fear, when he, with Rassak and Bela, returned through the narrow way to rescue Franz and I was left alone in the vault with the Judge. Involuntarily I put my hand in my breast pocket where was the trusty companion of all my excursions, my revolver. I could not but recall Franz Schorn's words on the platform, and the impression which they had made upon me was deepened when my hand met the small pieces of rope. I dreaded to see the fading light of the last lantern disappear in the narrow pathway. I was miserably uncomfortable in the spacious dark vault, where the light of a single lantern cast a ray of light so weak as only to enhance the black darkness of the place.

The Judge seated himself close beside me, and when the Captain vanished in the narrow path he seized my hand.

“Herr Professor,” he said, modulating his voice to the lowest whisper, “I have been assailed by a horrible suspicion as I sat here. I feared I never should see you again. Was the accident which befell you occasioned by chance? If the rope was strong enough to sustain the heavy weight of Schorn, how could it break with the much lesser strain of your weight? Tell me, Herr Professor, does Franz Schorn know that you have told me of his meeting you in the forest on the day of the murder?”

“No.”

“Then what I feared is but too certain. You saw him in the neighbourhood of the Lonely House on that day. The only witness against him must die. While he stood beneath us on the rocky platform he loosened the rope and cut it so that it parted as we were lowering you. We will examine the rope; there must be traces of a cut in it.”

Schorn had brought against this man the very accusation which was now brought against himself. He could have had no cause for his supposition, whilst the reason adduced by the Judge was not without probability.

“Perhaps you will object,” the Judge continued, “that he has saved your life; that without his aid you must have fallen into the chasm. He need not have stretched out his hand if he had wished to murder you. This thought also occurred to me, but, upon reflection, I find that my suspicion is only strengthened by your rescue. Perhaps his movement was involuntary—an impulse of the moment to seize a falling man—but, again, perhaps your rescue is only part of a cunning scheme. He makes sure that you never could decide to speak a word against the saviour of your life; he does not know that this word is already spoken. He thought, therefore, that he could save your life and yet attain his purpose without burdening his soul with a second murder. Indeed, should suspicion arise that the rope did not break accidentally, he might easily cast it upon another. Why else did he demand that I should take no part in drawing you up? He wished to arouse suspicion of me in your mind and in the Captain’s. None could attach to him, were it discovered later that the rope had actually been cut, if he saved your life, and he will not fail to remind

you that it was at the risk of his own. He is a thorough villain and incredibly cunning. I fear I shall have many difficulties to overcome before establishing the proof of his guilt and revealing him as the murderer of old Pollenz."

The Judge's words produced a deep impression on me. Had not everything that he set forth actually happened? One thing was certain—the rope had been cut. Whose was the blame? The Judge's—who could have no interest in plunging me into the abyss? Why should he attempt to take my life? Franz Schorn's—who had saved my life at the risk of his own? However the Judge might endeavour to disparage the danger to which he had exposed himself, I knew better. I had felt him stagger as he leaned over beyond the rock and dragged me toward him. The success of this hazardous action was due to his physical strength and good luck; it was little short of a miracle that he had not been dragged down to the depths with me. Where lay the truth? In vain I pondered; I could not fathom it.

Voices were heard coming through the nar-

row pathway, and the Captain, Rassak, Bela, and last of all, Schorn, appeared. Franz gave me a kindly nod; of the Judge he took not the smallest notice, but resumed his command and the guidance of the expedition. He directed the porters to strap together the ladders, of which we had hitherto made no use, and upon them placed the jackets of the men of the party, forming a litter for me. Rassak and Bela then bore me from beneath the vault to the entrance of the cave. I suffered intolerably; only when we had again entered the forest and my kind companions were able to make my litter softer with boughs and branches of trees did I find any relief from the torture I was enduring.

In this melancholy wise we returned to Lut-tach, and thus ended my investigation of an unexplored Ukraine cave.

CHAPTER XI.

FORCED SECLUSION.

I WAS confined to my lofty bed in my chamber in the inn for three days. The doctor insisted I must stay there with cold compresses upon my foot until the inflammation had entirely disappeared, and then a week at least must be spent in my room with the injured leg stretched out before me, nor could I dream of undertaking any further excursions until two weeks at least had elapsed.

This was a melancholy prospect. Two weeks of imprisonment in the bare, low-ceiled guest-chamber No. 2; while out of doors the sun was shining and calling me to wanderings in the forest and on the mountains. But what cannot be cured must be endured.

I could not complain of ennui. Of society I had more than enough; I sometimes longed to be alone for an hour to reflect upon my remarkable adventures, but I had visitors in unbroken succession, and until late in the evening I was not left for a moment to myself.

All the gentlemen whom I had met about the round table in the dining-room came to testify in the friendliest manner their sympathy, and to beg me to relate my adventures, while Mizka and Frau Franzka by turns saw to my comfort, attending most carefully to the compresses upon my ankle. I could not have been more kindly and attentively cared for than in the Slavonic inn in Ukraine. But it was almost too much of a good thing. Their perpetual attention became burdensome, and the constant stream of visitors wearied me. To tell the same thing over and over again was not very amusing, especially as a number of my auditors—Weber, Gunther, Meyer, Motic, and the notary, Deitrich—did not seem to give full credence to my story; that is, with regard to my rescue by Franz Schorn. They put all sorts of questions to me with regard to what had passed on the platform of rock, questions which I could not or would not answer, for, of course, I said not a word of the rope's bearing traces of having been cut, although this seemed to be just the very point to which they wished to lead me.

Through the Clerk, Herr Von Einern, I at

last learned the reason for their persistent questions. He expressed his indignation at the account which Herr Foligno had given on the evening of our adventure. It was eminently devised to arouse in his hearers a suspicion that in some manner Franz Schorn was to blame for my accident. He did not speak explicitly, but as unwilling to blame Schorn; he would leave that to me, who had sustained the injury; but in speaking thus he had contrived to increase the desire of those present to hear more.

The Captain confirmed his statement, but was indignant not only with Franz Schorn, but with the conduct of the Judge himself. He would not forgive Schorn for accusing Herr Foligno to me, apparently without any reason, while he found the revenge taken by the Judge unworthy and mean. In his opinion there had simply been an unfortunate accident; the rope had been cut by some sharp projection in the rocks; Franz had certainly risked his life to save mine, but this did not justify him in what he had said of the Judge, which made Herr Foligno the direct cause of the fall.

In the end I positively could not tell what to think of the affair. My harassing doubt was corroborated by a visit in the evening from the Judge. He had seen me during the day, but only for a few minutes at a time, to express his sympathy and to ask after my welfare, saying nothing during these short visits concerning my adventure; but in the evening he paid me a longer call, begging permission to bestow his society upon me for a while and to drink his wine in my room instead of in the dining-room below. He settled himself comfortably beside me, informing Mizka and Frau Franzka that he would assume the care of me during the evening and change my compresses. I tried to prevent this, but he would take no refusal, and rendered his services with assiduous precision. It was quite touching to see how careful he was to avoid giving me the least pain, and how he anticipated my every wish.

I could not but be grateful, but I was not comfortable in his society, for as soon as Mizka and Frau Franzka had left the room he took the opportunity to express himself most clearly with regard to our adventure and

Franz Schorn. He informed me that he had received a telegram from Laibach announcing that the investigating Judge and the Attorney General would visit Luttach on the morrow to conduct personally further inquiries, desirous of hearing from my own lips the manner of my meeting with Franz Schorn on the day of the murder. He coupled this information with the desire that I should not withhold from the gentlemen what I thought with regard to Franz Schorn's connection with my accident.

When I refused point blank to do this and declared that I suspected Franz of nothing, that I was convinced that accident only had caused the breaking of the rope, he became very indignant at such ill-judged forbearance.

"I cannot understand you, Herr Professor," he said angrily. "Suspicion is almost become certainty. Schorn has betrayed himself by superfluous caution. It is a common experience among lawyers that the criminal often furnishes the clue to his discovery by excess of caution, and this has been Schorn's case. To destroy all traces of a cut in the rope he has cut off both ends of the break and

thrown them away in the cave. Perhaps they can still be found; but should this not be the case, the fact of his so disposing of them tells against him. What other aim could he have in thus destroying all traces of the cut?"

"But he did not throw them away. He cut them off in my presence and gave them to me. Here they are," I replied, taking the ends of rope from my breast pocket.

I spoke and acted without thought, as I felt the moment the words were out of my mouth and I perceived their effect upon my hearer. He started from his chair as if from an electric shock and took instant possession of the ends of rope.

"He gave them to you," he cried, "and why? Ah! now I understand it all. Conscious of his guilt, he feared discovery, and bethought himself, in his over-caution, to inform you of what had been done. Suspicion must be thrown upon another, and I was that other. Tell me frankly, Herr Professor—I have a right to ask it—tell me, did he not hint to you that I had cut the rope?"

I had acted like a fool and was now painfully embarrassed. I was obliged to confess

to him that his suspicion was correct. He instantly grew excessively angry.

"What doubly detestable villainy," he cried, "refinement of rascality—to throw suspicion on me and to adduce as proof the cut which his own knife had made, and which, of course, he knew well enough where to find! Of course I know that his words did not make the smallest impression on you. Nevertheless they anger me beyond expression. I did not credit even the villain that he is with such rascality, but it shall react upon himself. These two fragments shall bear witness against him. I shall give them to the Attorney General to-morrow."

"Indeed you will not," I replied firmly. "I owe my life to Franz Schorn. Without his aid I should now be lying dead in the depths of the cave. I do not know whether a knife or a sharp stone worked the mischief, but I do know that Schorn risked his own life for mine. This is solely my affair. My life was imperilled and I surely have the right to demand that no evil shall be said of him who preserved it."

"Will you deny me the right to clear myself

from all suspicion? This can be done only by proving that Schorn himself cut the rope."

"No one has suspected you except Franz Schorn, and to me alone has he expressed his suspicion. I am sure that the breaking of the rope was an accident. I shall not allow suspicion to attach to any one, either to you or to Schorn. I require of you to return to me the pieces of rope and to be silent to the Attorney General concerning the whole matter; the affair concerns myself alone."

Herr Foligno made many objections to my demand. I found it difficult to soothe him; he was so indignant with Schorn for showing me the ends as proof against him. He burned with the desire for revenge for such an insult, and I succeeded only with great trouble and much entreaty in persuading him to be silent and to return to me the ends of rope.

He remained until far into the night—a civility I could easily have dispensed with. I was not comfortable in his society. I tried in vain to talk on indifferent subjects; he persisted in returning to the adventure in the cave and always with an attempt to cast further suspicion upon Schorn. His hatred for

Franz and his indignation at what Franz had said to me was so great that he could think of nothing else. He would have tormented me, I believe, until daybreak with his accusations and his discussions of the matter ; but at last I frankly told him that I had need of repose, and then he bade me good-night.

CHAPTER XII.

AN ARREST.

I HAD to undergo a long examination. The investigating Judge and the Attorney General came from Laibach. Immediately after receiving Herr Foligno's deposition, they determined to take the very uncomfortable journey to Luttach to hear for themselves from witnesses on the spot all that was known regarding Franz Schorn's actions and whereabouts during the last few weeks. The investigating Judge told me of this with all the courtesy of an Austrian official. With entire lack of reserve, he informed me that although Herr Foligno's carefully prepared paper was quite sufficient to attach suspicion to Schorn, it did not at all suffice to convince him of the young man's guilt. He requested me to tell everything that I knew of Schorn and to hold back nothing out of regard for the man who, as he had already heard in Adelsberg, had saved my life. It was my duty to tell not only the truth, but the whole truth.

The Judge was a handsome, kindly man, so courteous that he would not have me summoned for my examination to the court house, but took down my deposition in my room. Yet with all his amiability and in spite of the sympathy which he apparently felt for Franz Schorn, his inquiries were frightfully searching; he forced me to tell him more than I wished to.

I had intended at this hearing to confine myself to what I had dictated in the Judge's deposition, but I could not keep my resolution. When the Judge asked me if Franz Schorn, of whom I had seen much in the last few weeks, had never told me his reason for avoiding me in the forest, I could not reply in the negative, and I was forced to assent, and to relate the conversation I had had with Franz and his betrothed. I could not conceal that each had requested me to say nothing of the meeting in the forest. Such an interview as this of mine with the Judge is very curious. The witness knows that every word he utters is upon his oath, and also that it may decide the fate of a fellow mortal. Every consideration vanishes before such a respon-

sibility, and I could have none for the Judge. I had to acknowledge to my examiner that Anna and Franz had given as a reason of the request for my silence that the Judge's hatred of the young man was so intense that he would surely use my meeting with Franz as evidence against him.

The Judge shook his head thoughtfully on hearing this; he evidently did not credit their explanation. Had I cherished no suspicion? Had it never occurred to me as odd that Franz Schorn should have wounded his hand? I could not deny that such a suspicion had occurred to me, but I could declare with a good conscience that it had vanished entirely after I had come to know Schorn better.

What was the reason that after this first awakening of suspicion I had not informed the authorities of my meeting with the young man in the neighborhood? Why had I withheld this information until the day before yesterday? This keen questioning forced me to an exact reply. I told of how I had desired to give information immediately of my meeting with Schorn, and I gave Herr Foligno's reason for begging me not to insert it in an

official deposition, and as a natural consequence I related the reasoning by which he had induced me to render to him my official statement.

“Strange; very strange,” said the Judge, more to himself than to me. “Herr Foligno has allowed personal considerations, personal feelings to influence his official action. Very unjustifiable!”

He was silent for a while and then questioned me further with continued and frightful thoroughness. I did not wish to speak of the adventure in the cave, but when the interview was over, I had told everything that I knew about my fall, my rescue, and the accusations made by Schorn and the Judge with regard to the cut ends of rope. After the official paper had been read to me and I had signed it, the Judge offered me his hand.

“Your testimony has been of the greatest importance, Herr Professor,” he said gravely. “You have so far confirmed suspicion against Schorn that the young man’s arrest is an unavoidable necessity, but at the same time you have proved to me that an influence has been at work in this unfortunate affair which

I must investigate further. Whatever may be the true history of the strange adventure in the cave, Schorn undoubtedly saved your life and you owe him gratitude for it. If you wish to testify this, you can do so by preserving profound silence with regard to your testimony of to-day as well towards the friends as to the foes of Herr Schorn, and, of course, to Judge Foligno. He has nothing to do further with the official investigation; he must in his turn appear as a witness, and it is especially desirable for the establishment of the truth that your testimony with regard to him should remain unknown. May I hope that you will promise me inviolable secrecy towards Herr Foligno, Herr Professor?"

"Certainly, most willingly; but what am I to reply when Herr Foligno questions me? He wanted to send you an account of the adventure in the cave, and only desisted at my express desire."

"Do not let this consideration influence you. It is of the greatest importance in the investigation that the Judge should know nothing of your testimony with regard to the adventure in the cave. If he asks you, tell

him the simple truth; it is unlawful for witnesses to discuss together their testimony, and he is henceforth a witness like yourself. Tell him that I told you this, and that I enjoined it upon you to refuse even the slightest information with regard to your testimony."

With this counsel, which I determined to follow implicitly, the Judge took his leave. He left me in an indescribable agitation, which increased when the District Judge paid me a visit immediately after. He came, as he told me frankly, to learn how the investigating Judge had received my testimony. When I told him of the promise which I had given, he was greatly surprised.

"I! A witness like all the rest?" he cried indignantly. "These government officials are so puffed up with pride and self-conceit that they don't know what they are about. They owe to me, to my activity, to my research, every ray of light cast upon the darkness of the crime, and now they push me aside, rob me of the reward of my discovery, and regard me as a simple witness; but they shall not succeed; I will not submit; and you, too, Herr Professor, you need not feel yourself bound

by a promise which no one had a right to exact from you; you may without fear tell me anything that you desire."

"I do not know whether I should be justified in doing so or not," I replied, shrugging my shoulders. "I do not know the Austrian laws, but I am well aware that if I have undertaken no legal responsibility, a moral one rests upon me not to speak of my testimony after the promise which I have given. You must pardon me, Herr Foligno, if I preserve absolute silence."

He looked at me angrily and evilly. "As you please; I shall make no further request of you," he said after a little pause. "One thing I have a right to demand of you in a matter which concerns me personally. Have you——"

"I regret that I can make no reply to any question, whatever it may be. My promise to be silent was given unconditionally."

He cast at me a glance full of rage and left the room without saying farewell. I had deeply offended him by my persistent refusal. I sat alone with a heavy heart, discontented with myself. I had offended the man who

had been so kind and courteous to me during my stay in Luttach, and I had also placed him in a perilous position by my testimony to his superior. This was a very disagreeable thought. He was not aware of it, but when he learned it, would he not have a right to be angry with me and to accuse me of a breach of confidence? I had strengthened suspicion against Franz Schorn, the saviour of my life. It was my fault that the young man was now threatened with the loss of his liberty. I was provoked with myself for my imprudent and frank expressions, and yet again, when I reflected on the late examination and the questioning I had undergone, I could not have answered differently in accordance with the truth. I had surely only fulfilled my duty as a witness. In the deepest anxiety and with torturing impatience I awaited further developments. It was desperately hard to lie there and have cold bandages on my sprained ankle. I would have given anything to be able to do something, or that the visitors whom I had found so tiresome yesterday would return to-day, but I was, and remained, alone, confined to my bed.

Two hours passed. At last quick footsteps approached my door. Mizka entered breathless, her cheeks crimson, her eyes glowing, to tell me of what was the talk at present of all Luttach. Franz Schorn was the murderer of old Pollenz. The gentlemen from Laibach had been searching Schorn's house at his farm outside the town, and had found quantities of money, banknotes, and stock, and government bonds and other papers of value, all the wealth of the murdered man. Nevertheless Franz had denied everything, declaring that he was innocent, but his brazen falsehood had done him no good; he had been arrested, his hands fettered, and thus manacled had been brought between two gendarmes to Luttach. As he passed the house of the doctor, his betrothed was sitting at the window. She had seen him and had rushed down into the street. She had embraced him before everybody—he, the murderer of her father! The gendarmes were obliged to unclasp her arms. She had not wept a tear; she had looked up at him with sparkling eyes when the gendarmes bore him away.

“Do not despair, Franz,” she had called

after him. "God will not suffer the innocent to be condemned."

Then she had quietly gone with the doctor, who led her back into the house. Franz, however, had walked on between the gendarmes, his eyes cast gloomily on the ground. He had replied not a word to the abuse which was showered on him from all sides.

"Murderer!" "Dog of a German!" and other insulting epithets had been hurled after him by an increasing crowd of common people. He did not seem even to hear them. The people were so excited against him, so infuriated that the gendarmes had the greatest trouble in shielding him from their attack, and could hardly have succeeded in doing so if the Judge himself had not protected him from a couple of savage fellows, two labourers who had been dismissed from Schorn's farm and would gladly have revenged themselves upon their former master for their dismissal. By earnest admonition and threats of punishment the Judge had succeeded in quieting the mob, assuring the people that the murderer would not escape justice. He accompanied the prisoner to the court house,

receiving no thanks from him for his protection. Not a word did Franz address to him.

Upon an order from Herr Foligno, Herr Gunther provided a vehicle and horses, and, accompanied by the two gendarmes, bore off the manacled prisoner. The Judge said he would be taken to prison in Laibach and kept there until the court assembled, when he would be certainly tried as a murderer and hanged.

All this Mizka detailed to me in the greatest agitation. Evidently she felt much satisfaction in the discovery of the murderer, and that it should be precisely Franz Schorn, whom every one hated, who was now delivered over to the law. Not a word of sympathy did the girl, usually so good-humoured, have for the unfortunate man; not a doubt of his guilt stirred within her; with a triumphant smile she left me after she had told her news.

"The voice of the people is the voice of God," the Judge had once said. The doctor had replied, "The people's gossip is the voice of the devil." Was the Judge now proved to be right? The proof of Schorn's guilt seemed to grow clearer, and yet, strangely enough,

my doubt of it grew stronger with every hour. My reason told me that there could be no room for doubt, now that upon searching his house the booty had been discovered, but my heart rebelled against even this proof. I felt for the first time that I had taken more than a fleeting interest in the young man, that there had been between us a heartfelt sympathy which forbade me in the face of all proof yet adduced, to believe in the possibility of his guilt.

I was not long left to my melancholy reflections. A visitor interrupted them. The Burgomaster came, not only to inquire after my welfare, but to tell me of the discoveries made with regard to Schorn and of all that had been going on in the town while I lay bedridden. He had not yet left me before another visitor appeared, and he was followed by a third and a fourth. All the evening cronies of the round table made up for their absence in the morning, and through the entire afternoon I was not again alone. All my visitors brought melancholy confirmation of what Mizka had told me. Even the Captain and the Burgomaster were now convinced of

Schorn's guilt, and acknowledged their conviction openly. The search in his house had brought much to light; so much money had been found that it was impossible to believe Franz had come by it honestly. His very conduct told against him—his bare-faced denial, as well as his unbroken silence when no credit was given to his words. There was but one opinion as to his guilt, and also as to the behaviour of the Judge. Even the Judge's opponents declared that Franz owed his escape from the indignant mob to his magnanimous protection. There was also but one voice with regard to the conduct of the Laibach court. It had been admirable, particularly that of the investigating Judge, who in a single day had discovered every particular concerning Schorn's life during the last few weeks. Almost all the gentlemen and a number of other people besides, as well as Bela and Rassak, had been examined by him. The officials had said nothing of the result of their evidence, and had enjoined the strictest silence upon the witnesses, who, however, were at liberty to declare that they considered Franz Schorn guilty, and they did so. The

Clerk alone, Herr von Einern, prudently withheld his opinion in the matter.

Did the doctor also believe in Franz Schorn's guilt? He and the Judge were the only ones who paid me no visit on this day. The Judge probably could not forget my refusal to answer his questions, and was still offended. I was at heart very glad that he did not come. His visit could have given rise only to unpleasant discussions; but the doctor I should like to have seen, partly to obtain medical advice for the night, and partly to learn his opinion of the discoveries concerning Schorn. My wish was fulfilled late in the evening, when it was nearly nine o'clock. The doctor came, but he was not alone. To my great surprise he was accompanied by Anna Pollenz. My astonishment when I saw the lovely Anna enter the room on the arm of her old friend must have been mirrored in my face, for Anna blushed, and the doctor, with his characteristic short laugh, which I was always glad to hear, said:

"You wonder at this strange visit so late in the evening, Herr Professor. Well, you are right. This little girl might as well have

come to you to-morrow morning, at a more fitting time; but she gave me no rest until I complied with her wish and brought her to you. If I had not consented she might perhaps have come all alone, and have given occasion for all sorts of gossip in Luttach. The entire population of the town has run mad; even the most sensible are infected with the nonsense which is heard on all sides. I could not have believed it, but since Franz's arrest and removal to Laibach, even the Captain and the Burgomaster have lost faith in him and consider him guilty, and yet everything adduced against him is thorough, unmitigated bosh. Not a word of it is true. The gentlemen from Laibach are principally to blame, with their arrest. They would hardly have proceeded to such extremities if the Judge had not taken care that they should hear from all sides the falsehoods invented by himself. This poor little girl has had a frightful day. Not only has her Franz been arrested—that is not the worst, for he will very soon be free again—but all the world, with the exception of the Clerk and myself, believe in Franz's guilt, and people are not

ashamed to declare this openly. This makes my little Anna desperate. 'The Herr Professor, who loves Franz so much, cannot think him guilty,' she said, and insisted upon coming to you. I could not but do as she asked, and here we are. Well, perhaps it is all right; the poor child will not speak here to deaf ears, and will be soothed to see that every one does not consider Franz a murderer and thief. Sit down, my child, here in this chair, and pour out your heart to the Herr Professor. He will listen to you kindly."

I had been observing Anna during this long introduction. Her colour changed from red to pale and then to red again as the old doctor continued. Her eyes sparkled as she turned to me, and she gazed at me with an imploring expression in them. She was wonderfully lovely. My heart gave a throb. Was I altogether free from blame?

Anna seated herself at her old friend's bidding beside my bed and gazed at me with a long, searching look in her dark eyes, as if to read in my face the possibility of my thinking her Franz guilty.

"You cannot mistrust him, Herr Profes-

sor," she said, "he has such a regard for you, and he saved your life."

There was not much logic in these words, but they made me ashamed of myself nevertheless. Franz could not be guilty unless she were his accomplice, and I had almost believed in his guilt. I could not endure the look of those pure, clear eyes; my own dropped before them. I was ashamed.

"If all the rest think him guilty," she continued in a tone of firm conviction, "you cannot. You believe in him, and you must feel it your duty to do everything you can to prove his innocence, for he saved your life. Therefore I come to you; I wished to speak to you before to-morrow. I shall sleep quietly, for I know that you will stand by me. Franz told me yesterday evening that the Judge had tried to take your life; that he is your worst enemy. You will counsel me truly when I have confided to you a secret which I have kept until now, a suspicion which I have not ventured to utter even to my dearest friend and relative."

"Speak, dear child," I replied, taking her hand and pressing it cordially. "I assure

you that I have no dearer wish than to establish the innocence of the saviour of my life."

"I know it and will trust you," she replied frankly. "You and my kind friend, the doctor, both of you shall counsel me," she continued, clasping my hand in one of hers and extending the other to the doctor.

"What do you mean, you strange child?" the doctor cried. "If you have a secret upon your soul, you ought to have told me of it long ago. If you needed counsel, you could always have had it from me."

"I did not dare to. Franz forbade me. Franz himself did not believe me until yesterday evening. He is innocent. He always said that my fear of Herr Foligno and my detestation of him misled me."

"Of whom are you speaking, child?" asked the doctor.

Instead of answering, Anna turned to me.

"When you reached the Lonely House on that terrible day, Herr Professor, did you not see in its neighbourhood another man beside Franz?" she asked.

"No. No one."

"I did not mean near the house itself, but

on the upper path, the one leading along the rocks to Luttach?"

"I saw no one there either."

"You did not see him? I am sorry. Franz was sure yesterday that you did."

"But who in all the world should the Professor have seen?" asked the doctor curiously.

"The Judge," Anna replied. "I was sure I saw him, but I would not say so decidedly, and Franz, until yesterday, thought I might be mistaken and would not allow me to found an unjust suspicion upon an uncertain fact."

The doctor was as astonished and startled as was I by Anna's words. He desired to know more from her, and when I begged the young girl to give us her full confidence and to tell us all that she knew and believed, she yielded to our request and related what had lain so long upon her heart.

When on that dreadful day Anna had left home and was going down the path with her old Johanna to Luttach, she looked up by chance where the oaks grew thin and saw on the upper pathway a man approaching the Lonely House. She thought she recognized

the Judge, but she could not be certain, for she had seen the figure only for a moment and had taken no trouble to recognize it, since she attached no importance to what she saw. The Judge had often gone to her father and had usually taken the upper pathway, wherefore she did not think of it again. Only upon hearing the terrible news of the murder of her father was the strange suspicion suddenly aroused within her that the Judge was the murderer, and this suspicion had been gradually confirmed. To hardly one other human being except to his friend the Judge, would her father have opened the locked front door. While he was alone he would have admitted no other. The Judge had known that her father had large sums of money in the house and was quite familiar with the place where they would be found.

“But had I a right upon such slight grounds to found a suspicion of a respectable man? I asked myself,” Anna proceeded. “I answered no, but in spite of this ‘no’ I could not combat my thoughts, and it was most terrible for me that I myself was partly to blame for my father’s death if my suspicion were

correct. The day before the Judge had come to visit my father, and had not found him at home. My father had left word, however, that he would soon return, and I thought I ought to tell this to the visitor because it might have provoked my father to know that I had turned away his friend. The Judge then begged my permission to wait, and when I gave it reluctantly, he sat down by me in my room and began a conversation. During this conversation I told him that my father had gone to Luttach to get papers of value from the post. He would not send old Johanna because the sum in question was too large to be entrusted to so old a woman. The Judge knew also from me that my father had much money in the house, and that I was going on the following day to visit my Aunt Laucic in Luttach, when Johanna would accompany me, so that after eleven o'clock he might see my father alone. All this I told him, and it all recurred to my mind. I had myself told the murderer when his victim would be alone and when he could commit the deed."

In her distress Anna went on to say that she did not venture to mention her suspicion

to the Captain—he was a friend of the Judge’s—and only to her betrothed, from whom she kept no secrets, did she tell what was in her mind. He begged her, however, not to confide in any other human being. Franz declared that the Judge was not capable of such villainy. He tried to prove to her that her suspicions were groundless. “Does not he often climb about the rocks?” he asked. “Even had he been in the neighbourhood of the Lonely House, that ought to be no ground of suspicion against him, for I myself was met by the Herr Professor in the forest, as I was prowling about in hopes of meeting you.” When her lover said this, Anna was seized with a dreadful anxiety lest he might really be suspected, and Franz, too, could understand that he was in peril. He knew how he was disliked, and how any opportunity would be seized to do him harm.

Franz had insisted, however, that the Judge was incapable of the murder, and he had forbidden Anna to say one word further upon the subject. “Because he is my enemy,” he told her; “because he is always circulating damaging reports of me behind my back, we

must take care not to be unjust towards him.” He had spoken thus until yesterday, but when he returned from the expedition to the cave and told Anna of his adventure there, he had suddenly changed his opinion with regard to what she had always thought. “It is beyond doubt,” he said, “that the Judge cut the rope. What reason could he have for such an act? He wished to plunge the Professor into the abyss. I am now convinced that the Professor saw him also in the neighbourhood of the Lonely House. You were not deceived when you recognized him on the upper pathway. He fears that the Professor may betray him, and wishes to put so dangerous a witness out of the way. There could be no other reason for his infamous attempt upon the life of the kind old man, whose friend he pretends to be. He planned a murder, and now I can believe also that he is the murderer of your father. Let him take care; I shall speak to the Professor. I will tell him of your suspicion; he will tell me whether he saw the Judge that day.” But Franz soon after was arrested and Anna felt it her duty to do what he had wished to do.

"That is why I am come to you, Herr Professor," she concluded; "you must counsel me. You must help me to discover the real criminal and to set an innocent man at liberty."

While Anna had been speaking, the doctor, who had also seated himself beside my bed, had been continually getting up and sitting down again, possessed by a feverish restlessness, although listening in silence to every word spoken by the young girl. Now that Anna had finished, he exclaimed:

"Do you want to drive two old men crazy with your deuce of a story? Child, have you had such thoughts in your head and heart for weeks and never said a word of them? Think of what might have been done in those weeks! Think of how suspicion might have been turned in other directions! You are sure, Herr Professor, that you did not see the Judge on the rocky pathway?"

"I am sure of it."

"But may he not have been there without your seeing him, or are you sure that he was not there?"

"I believe that he was there."



"YOU MUST HELP ME!"

“And what reason have you for your belief? Out with it, Herr Professor! The scales are falling from my eyes. I begin to see clearly. This deuce of a girl has enlightened my stupidity, but what is the use of my seeing? Franz and the child have both shown confidence in you, and you must justify it. Out with what you know without any reserve!”

He was right; I could not be silent. The half promise which I had once given to the Judge to protect him from any chaffing to which he might be subjected with regard to the pocket handkerchief found where it had been could not bind me. I told of my finding the bloody handkerchief and of the Judge's explanation.

“It is he! It is he and no other!” exclaimed the doctor, quite beside himself. “Did I not always say that the murderer must have been an intimate friend of the old man? Oh, blind fool that I have been! Why did I not think of him, when for two weeks he wore a black glove on his right hand? He had good reason to wish to see you vanish in the abyss. You, who could bring such evi-

dence against him. And you fell into his trap, and have been silent all this while, without harbouring any suspicion of him! For shame, Herr Professor! No, you need not be ashamed of yourself, you kind, old, unsuspecting man; but I could tear my hair for being such a fool and letting him lead me by the nose as he has done."

"Are you sure now that you are not deceiving yourself?" I asked very gravely. My heart was beating violently. There is something fearful in such a suspicion. Suddenly as it had arisen, it had now entire possession of me; but had I not entertained the same, and perhaps with more reason, of Franz Schorn? Could I trust myself since I had once deceived myself?

No such reflections troubled the doctor:

"I am so convinced," he said, clapping his hands as if in triumph, "that I would myself condemn the fellow to be hanged, if it lay in my province to do so. Hanged he shall be, I promise you, little girl, and we will take your Franz in triumph from the prison in Laibach and carry him home. How it is to be done, I do not see at present; but, rely upon it, I will

do it. I will follow the murderer's tracks like a bloodhound. He has no idea that he is suspected, and that I have discovered his plots. He shall find it out, but only when we are taking Franz from prison in Laibach. Until then not a word to anybody, Herr Professor."

"Is it not our duty to inform the court in Laibach of what we suspect and of our grounds for doing so?"

"Not a word in that quarter. With all due reverence for the gentlemen in Laibach, the Judges and the Attorney General; before they can make up their minds to believe that a colleague, a District Judge, is a common murderer and thief, the proofs must be as clear as daylight. Only when we deliver him over to them, and they must do their part, can we be sure of them. I would sooner confide in our Clerk; he would throw all forbearance to the winds; but should we admit him to our confidence now, we should be placing him in a very embarrassing position, for the District Judge is, after all, his chief. Therefore, not a word, Herr Professor, until we have further proofs against the scoundrel. Now that we are on the scent, it will, I hope, not be long."

I was obliged to admit that the doctor's plan was the right one, and my admission flattered him.

"Do you not remember how day before yesterday evening the Judge said with a sneer, 'A great criminal lawyer is lost in you, doctor'? I will prove to him that he was right. Only trust me, Herr Professor; you shall not repent it. But be sure to follow a piece of advice which I must give you. Remember that it is to the Judge's interest to be rid of you; therefore, beware of him. It will do no harm to have your revolver where you can reach it in a moment, day or night."

I promised to follow his advice. We talked on for half an hour very pleasantly. The doctor was in the best humour in the world, and the charming little Anna was now so full of hope for a speedy reunion with her Franz that she almost forgot her grief at his imprisonment. She was indeed a lovely child, and as she talked on so heart-free and confidentially with us two old men, I was really in love with her myself. Upon their departure the doctor promised me that he would allow me to leave my bed on the following day, and

Anna promised to pay me repeated visits so long as I was confined to my room. Thus we parted in the most friendly manner. The doctor turned as he was about to close the door behind him and said:

“Do you know, Herr Professor, what comforts me in this cursed affair?”

“What?”

“That Foligno is no Slav, but an Italian. Believe me, a Slav would be incapable of such villainy. Good-night, Herr Professor.”

CHAPTER XIII.

AN OLD CHEST.

THREE very wearisome days ensued. To be sure, I was allowed to leave my bed and was no longer forced to apply cold bandages to my sprained ankle, but I was a prisoner on a very uncomfortable sofa, whereon my leg was stretched out, and therefore condemned to intolerable, tedious idleness. I could not even move sufficiently to prepare my treasures—the butterflies and beetles—for my collection. My beautiful *Cæcigena* caterpillars had to be fed by Mizka, and I was obliged to congratulate myself that she undertook what must have been a very humdrum task with amiable readiness.

For three days the doctor had decreed that I must keep a recumbent position; thereafter I might sit up on the sofa and move about the room a little. I looked forward to the expiration of this time with unfeigned longing, for such enforced idleness is intolerable for a healthy man. Visitors were not lacking dur-

ing those endless three days. The gentlemen of Luttach took pains to entertain me, but their visits were more of a pain than a pleasure, for the subject of their conversation was forever the same—the assured guilt of Franz Schorn. No one had the least doubt that he was the criminal. The Judge had shown them so many proofs of it that they were almost provoked with me because I would not join in the universal condemnation of the man, but declared that it was our duty to believe in the possibility of his innocence as long as he was not officially condemned. More than this I could not say, after my promise to the doctor, therefore I was compelled to listen silently when the alleged proofs of Schorn's guilt were discussed, which were downright fabrications. I looked forward with some dread to a visit from the Judge. It would have been almost impossible for me to appear unembarrassed in his presence. But the duty of playing the hypocrite and feigning friendship was fortunately not enforced upon me. He not only did not call upon me, but sent an excuse by Mizka. He was forced to go to Görz for a few days, and had so much to do before his

departure that he had not a quarter of an hour to call his own. Upon his return he hoped to find me entirely recovered.

The doctor was irritated by this journey. It deranged his schemes. He wished to have an opportunity to watch the man narrowly, which it would be impossible for him to do in Görz, the doctor was not, therefore, in a very good humour, and his visits would have contributed but little to my enlivenment had not the charming little Anna always accompanied him. The lovely young girl crept further and further into my heart with every visit. While we two old men were feverish with impatience to act, she bore this state of anxiety with angelic patience and admirable serenity. She was firm in her pious faith in Divine justice; she was sure that we should succeed in rescuing the innocent and in bringing the guilty to punishment. This conviction made it possible for her to wait patiently.

At last the tiresome three days were over. On the fourth day the doctor gave me permission to sit up on the sofa, and as long as my foot did not pain me, to take several steps about my room. I breathed more freely. Now

I could occupy myself. Before my accident I had collected a wealth of material which had all to be arranged. My *Lepidoptera* were to be mounted, my *Coleoptera* prepared, some doubtful species named, etc. Thus I had an abundance of work for several days and need fear no ennui.

Of course, I wished to begin work immediately, when an obstacle presented itself which I had never thought of. I had no place to spread out my entomological treasures, or where I could put my boards for mounting the butterflies, which were now packed together in my trunk, but would take considerable room when spread out to receive the precious insects. Hitherto I had found the lack of furniture in my simple room not inconvenient, but now it became so. If I could only have a bureau with two or three drawers in which I could lay the boards for the accommodation of my spoils, all would be well and I should be quite content.

Perhaps Frau Franzka could help me. There must be some such bureau in Luttach. Frau Franzka was summoned. The word "bureau" she did not understand, but when

I described to her the piece of furniture that I wished, she exclaimed joyfully :

“Ah, the Herr Professor means a chest! That is easily procured. Upstairs in the Judge’s sleeping-room there is a large old chest with four drawers. It is not beautiful, but very roomy. If the Herr Professor would like it, I will gladly have it brought down.”

Its lack of beauty was of no consequence to me, in consideration of the space it afforded, but I did not like to take the chest from the chamber of the Judge. I preferred not to ask of him the smallest favour. I said so to Frau Franzka, but she made light of my scruples, saying :

“The Herr Foligno never uses the old chest. He used to put his linen in it, but now he keeps it in a very fine new chest which I bought for him, and which stands in his parlour. The old chest is empty ; the Judge will be glad to have it taken out of his room.”

“But Herr Foligno is still away. You cannot ask his permission.”

“It is not necessary. The chest belongs to me. Herr Foligno, besides, owes me a great deal of money, and he cannot object to my

bringing down for the Herr Professor an old chest which he does not use."

I tried to make objection, but Frau Franzka was a resolute lady, and persisted in what she had once decided upon. She called her husband and a servant, and sent them up into the Judge's sleeping-room to bring down the chest, and in a few minutes, against the long bare wall of my room there stood a large, old-fashioned bureau, not elegant, indeed, but painted black, and with four drawers which gave abundant room for my requirements.

"There is the old chest," Frau Franzka said with satisfaction. "The Herr Professor need not fear; I will take it upon myself to settle matters with the Judge; but I must see if he has left anything in the drawers. I don't think so, but if it should be the case, I can easily transfer them to his new chest."

She tried to draw out the topmost drawer by its metal handles, but it would not open.

"That is strange," she said. "The wood must have swelled so that the drawer sticks."

"Perhaps it is locked," I remarked.

"Oh, no, certainly not. The Judge never locks his chests; he always leaves them open,

and, besides, I do not know whether he had any key, but we can soon see. There is just such another chest in our sleeping-room; my husband has the key and we can see if it will open it."

She said several words in Slavonic to her husband, and he took a queer little key out of his pocket and handed it to her.

The key fitted in the lock and turned. Frau Franzka then opened the topmost drawer without difficulty. She glanced inside it and recoiled with a slight scream.

"Oh, Holy Virgin!" she cried, clasping her hands. "What is all this? A shirt, a summer suit, a silk pocket handkerchief, all spotted with blood, and oh, blessed Maria, who would have thought that Herr Foligno had so much money hid away in this old chest!"

Instantly I was possessed by a strange foreboding. There lay the money which the murderer had stolen from his victim. I sprang up from the sofa without thinking of my sprained ankle and walked hastily across the room, never heeding the pain.

Yes, there lay the stolen money. Several packages of banknotes of a hundred gulden

each, and beside them a bundle of papers of value, the topmost of these showing the same dark spots, traces of the blood from the wounded hand of the murderer, who had taken no care to avoid staining them. Here, hidden away in the old chest, were the proofs of the murderer's guilt; the bloodstained clothing which he had worn when he committed the deed; and the handkerchief which I had given to him was there also. If there had been any doubt until now as to the identity of the criminal, it vanished on the instant. Link by link in an indestructible chain the proofs were clearly here for the conviction of the District Judge. In fancy I saw him contemplating his murderous scheme, walking up the rocky path towards the Lonely House. He knew that he should find the old man alone there; he had been told this on the day before. Anna had thoughtlessly informed him that her father would be alone in the afternoon. Her account of the considerable amount of money which the old man had received by the morning's post had begotten the murderous scheme. He reaches the house, no one having seen him on the rocky pathway. He looks about him.

No human being is near who could observe him. He does not dream that Anna has seen him. He knocks. The old man opens the door and conducts him to his room, where a struggle ensues, a struggle in which the murderer wounds his hand, but from which he comes forth victorious. The crime is committed. The murderer with his bleeding hand has taken the banknotes and papers from the desk which he knew so well; in his excitement he has hardly noticed that he was wounded. He is suddenly conscious of pain in his hand, and the thought occurs to him that his wound might betray him. With terror he perceives that his dress, his shirt, his waistcoat and trousers, all wear bloody traces of the struggle. He tries to remove them with his handkerchief, but in vain. How can he explain these stains when he returns to Luttach? He devises one means—to declare that he fell among the rocks and wounded his hand. Every one knows that he frequently climbs about among the rocks and how easily such an accident might occur. If he can bring back to the old naturalist a rare plant which usually grows upon almost inaccessible rocks, his

story of a fall will be all the more credible. The *Ophrys Bertolini* grows in the neighbourhood; except himself no one knows the locality. It is easily reached; he hastily plucks the beautiful flowers, losing his handkerchief as he does so, but without noticing it he hurries away from the neighbourhood of the Lonely House.

Fortune favours him. No one meets him; no one sees him when he reaches the inn and hastens to his chamber. There he locks himself in; he must change his clothes; but what shall he do with his bloodstained apparel? Suddenly the old bureau occurs to him; it stands unused in his sleeping-room. He could not have a better, a more secure hiding place. He conceals the clothes and his plunder in the top drawer, locks it, and puts the key in his pocket. Now he is safe; no suspicion can possibly fall upon him, the Judge, the most prominent official in the town. There can be no searching of his room. He himself would superintend whatever search there might be. The bloodstained clothing, the banknotes and the papers could be nowhere more safe from discovery than in the locked drawer of the old

bureau. He breathes more freely. There is a knock at the door. The old Professor asks for admission. He is obliged to receive him. This will give him an opportunity of relating the story of his fall among the rocks. He is dismayed at learning that the murder has been discovered sooner than he anticipated, but he composes himself, and when he hears that Franz Schorn has been seen in the vicinity of the Lonely House, he devises a plan for throwing suspicion upon him, his mortal enemy, and with vindictive cunning proceeds to carry it out, using every circumstance that could lead step by step to the consummation of the crime without exposing himself at any point. Thus he feels perfectly safe, when suddenly he makes the terrible discovery that there exists a witness against him. The old Professor has found his bloody handkerchief near the Lonely House. He finds it easy to deceive the unsuspecting old man. He succeeds in convincing him that Franz Schorn is the murderer, but as long as the Professor lives, the danger of detection hangs over his head. He induces the foolish old man to undertake expeditions among the most danger-

ous rocks, in the hope of his falling a victim to some accident, but when this scheme fails, he determines to efface all trace of the first murder by a second. The exploration of the cave, in which he asks to join, furnishes a means to do so. The Professor must die, but before his death he must send the official deposition which is so essential for Schorn's conviction.

Here also his murderous design fails, but he manages to cast suspicion upon Franz Schorn in the matter of cutting the rope, and the young man is arrested. The murderer triumphs.

Then by a marvellous chance the old chest is opened during his absence from home, and the clear proofs of his guilt are discovered by the very man whom he wished, as the only witness against him, to remove from his path.

I stood paralyzed before the open drawer. All the past, which it has taken minutes to relate, flashed upon my mind with the speed of lightning. The proofs of the murderer's guilt which the doctor had been so anxious to obtain were now before me. Chance had placed them in my hands. What was I to make of this chance was the next question.

“We must not touch these things,” I said to Frau Franzka, who with her old husband stood speechless with astonishment, gazing at the money in the drawer. They had never in their lives seen so much at a time. “The Judge might suspect us of having taken some of his heap of money. Lock the drawer again, Frau Franzka; we will give the key to the Clerk, and the doctor shall be witness that we do so. We three, you, your husband and I, will stay here until Mizka fetches the doctor and the Clerk, and we can each testify that none of the money has been taken.”

“So much money! And he owes me over five hundred gulden, with all that pile in his drawer!” exclaimed Frau Franzka, who was reluctant to lose sight of the banknotes, but on my reiterated request, she locked it up, and then called Mizka, telling her to go immediately for the Herr Einern and the doctor, begging them to come as quick as possible to the Herr Professor in the “Golden Vine.”

We had not long to wait. The doctor came first. Mizka met him in the street near the house. I drew him aside and told him in a whisper of the contents of the upper drawer

of the bureau. He was beside himself with joy.

“We have him! We have him!” he exclaimed aloud, with what was almost a leap in the air. Only when he saw the stare with which Frau Franzka and her husband regarded him—they might well have supposed he had lost his wits—he grew calmer, and I told him that I had sent also for the Clerk.

“Quite right,” he said. “We must tell him everything. Now that we have such positive proof of the Judge’s guilt, he can act, and he must act. He is a brave and honourable man. He will fulfil the promise he once made to our little Anna. Here he comes. I hear his step on the stair.”

The Clerk entered the room. He seemed surprised on finding the doctor and my host and hostess. Frau Franzka hurried towards him. She had been silent so long that she was eager to pour out her heart. In a burst of Slavonic, of which I did not understand one syllable, she talked away to the Clerk, who listened with the deepest attention. I would not interrupt her, for I could easily perceive from her gestures what she was relating. The

Clerk's face grew darker and darker as Frau Fanzka continued. At last she paused and delivered to him the key of the bureau. He then turned to me and said very gravely:

“Frau Franzka has told me of the remarkable discovery which she has made in that bureau. Before I examine its contents I wish to hear what you have to say, Herr Professor. I assume that you have summoned me hither, not as your friend of the evenings about the round table, but as the Clerk, the only representative of the law in the Judge's absence. I shall therefore receive what you have to say, not as the testimony of a friend, but officially. Frau Franzka, you will retire to another room with your husband, while I hear what the Herr Professor has to tell. I warn you to say not one word to any one—I repeat, to *any one*—of what you have discovered in the drawer there. You will expose yourself to grave penalties if you should refuse to follow my direction. Wait quietly until I send for you. Very shortly I will summon you and your husband to swear to whatever you have to say. Now go. Do you desire, Herr Professor, that the doctor should withdraw also?”

“No. On the contrary, I desire his presence during my deposition, which I must make to you. He can complete what I have to say.”

I waited until the host and hostess had obediently withdrawn, and then I addressed the Clerk.

“On the day on which the miserable old Pollenz was murdered, it was to you that his daughter turned, enjoining upon you the duty of discovering the murderer and delivering him to justice. I heard the young girl’s moving appeal and was a witness of your silent promise to her. I now desire from you the fulfilment of that promise.”

“I will fulfil my duty. The guilty man, whosoever he may be, shall not escape punishment if proof sufficient can be adduced of his guilt.”

“This proof I am prepared to give, and so clearly that no doubt can remain in your mind. Listen.”

I had imposed a hard task upon myself—that of succinctly informing the Clerk of all the facts which sufficed to weld a chain of proof against the murderer; the part he had played towards me, arousing in me suspicions

not only of Franz Schorn, but of the lovely Anna, in order to procure my signature to the deposition which he made out and sent to Laibach. I recalled as well as I could the words which the murderer had dictated to me; every one of those words seemed to form a link in the chain of proof; and, in conclusion, I described to him the contents of the old bureau, saying:

“This is the accumulated evidence which I hand over to you, and I demand that in virtue of your office the true criminal shall be delivered to the authorities in Laibach, so that an innocent man may not wear disgraceful fetters an hour longer than is absolutely necessary.”

“You impose a fearful responsibility upon me, but I shall not refuse to accept it,” the Clerk replied with a profound sigh. “What you have just told me confirms a horrible suspicion which I have had ever since the day of the murder. I never believed in Schorn’s guilt. I always had a secret doubt of the Judge, but I dared not give expression to it; it was impossible to gather the smallest evidence against him. I take upon myself great

responsibility in proceeding against my chief, in arresting him, and transferring him to Laibach, but it must be done as soon as he returns from Görz. I will employ this day in examining all the testimony you have here given me, as well as the witnesses—yourself, Fräulein Anna Pollenz, Frau Franzka and her husband—and then I will send to Laibach all the material I have collected, with the bloodstained clothing and the banknotes. The Attorney General there will do his duty. I transcend my powers perhaps in thus forestalling my chief. I will——” he paused, listening.

A vehicle rolled through the narrow street and stopped before the house. The doctor hurried to the window.

“The Judge,” he cried, “has just descended from the carriage and has entered the house.”

The Clerk started and grew pale.

“He comes too early,” he said. “I have no officially confirmed evidence against him. I have no right to arrest him.”

“Will you give him time to escape?” cried the doctor. “If he goes to his chamber and

misses the old bureau, he will know that he is found out."

"You are right. I will dare all. Let me have paper, pen and ink, Herr Professor, as quickly as possible, for at this moment I am the representative of the law in Luttach. The Judge has not yet exhausted his leave of absence; he has not yet resumed the duties of his office." He wrote a few lines hurriedly. "This order must go immediately to the captain of the gendarmes. Will you undertake to carry it, Herr Doctor?"

"With all the pleasure in life. In five minutes I will be here again with the gendarmes. The bird shall not escape," cried the doctor, as he snatched the order from the Clerk's hand and rushed away without a moment's delay. He could hardly have reached the front door, when from above came the voice of the Judge, calling:

"Mizka! Mizka!"

Mizka replied from below in a few Slavonic words, and a loud, brief conversation ensued in that language.

"He has missed the bureau and Mizka is telling him that it has been taken down to

your room because you needed it, Herr Professor," the Clerk whispered to me.

The Judge overhead uttered a wild Slavonic curse. We heard his resounding tread as he rushed down the stairs and then, without knocking, threw open the door of my room and entered. When he found that I was not alone, but that the Clerk was with me, he started back, and remained for a moment on the threshold gazing at the Clerk and myself with a keen, searching look, which afterwards flashed round the room as if in quest of something. When it rested on the blackened, old bureau, he fell into a rage, and, coming up to me, demanded in a furious tone:

"How dared you have my furniture removed from my room in my absence and placed here for your own use?"

As he spoke these words he was ghastly to look upon; his pale lips quivered, his dark eyes glittered in his sallow face, and were again riveted with an indescribable expression upon the old bureau.

His insolence aroused my indignation, but I forced myself to reply to him calmly.

"I must beg you to speak more courte-

ously," I answered, suppressing my detestation. "If you conceive that there has been an infringement of your rights, it is not to me that you must appeal, but to Frau Franzka. She told me that this old bureau was never used by you, and that you would be glad to have so superfluous a piece of furniture removed from your room. Only upon her assurance that this was the case did I consent to have it brought hither."

My reply seemed to quiet him somewhat. He lowered his voice as he continued:

"You see that I do use it. The upper drawer is locked."

He went up to the bureau and pulled the metal handles of the upper drawer. Upon finding that it would not open, he breathed more freely and turned to me again, with a wholly different expression of countenance.

"Excuse my rude manner," he suddenly said, in a very friendly way; "I was angry. It irritated me that the furniture of my room should be meddled with. The old bureau serves me as a receptacle for old clothes. I must therefore beg that it be returned to me."

"It was delivered to me by its owner, Frau

Franzka. I have no authority over its removal."

"You refuse?" he said, flaming up again; but he mastered himself, only giving me a sinister look, as he opened the door and called loudly into the hall:

"Frau Franzka! Frau Franzka!"

The host and hostess had been waiting in another room for the summons of the Clerk. They now appeared, Frau Franzka with a very embarrassed countenance, where the consciousness of guilt was openly to be seen. Now that the Judge was present, any command of the Clerk would avail nothing with her. She must reply to whatever the Judge should ask.

"How dare you have that chest taken from my room? It must be carried up again immediately."

Shyly and trembling with fear Frau Franzka gazed at the angry man.

"Do not be so angry, Herr Foligno," she said. "I thought the chest was quite empty. I should not have brought it down here if I had known that you had so much money in it. But we did not touch it. Herr von Einern has the key."

The effect of these words upon the man was terrible. He staggered back as if struck by a sudden blow, staring from Frau Franzka to the Clerk. He bit his lips without feeling that he drew blood and that a drop trickled down his chin. Frau Franzka's simple words had revealed all; his secret was betrayed; his guilt discovered.

Only for a second did terror paralyze him. He quickly collected himself, seeing that the only possibility of escape lay in maintaining absolute calmness, and with wonderful self-control he said in a menacing tone:

"You presumed to open the chest with a master key, and you, Herr von Einern, have this master key in your possession. I demand that it be instantly delivered to me."

Hitherto the Clerk had stood with folded arms, a motionless spectator of the scene before him. A contemptuous smile played about his lips. He made no reply to the Judge's demand.

"You do not answer me. You refuse to obey my orders?" the Judge continued. "I shall hold you accountable for this. Do not forget, sir, that this forcible breaking open



THEN BEGAN A STRUGGLE, A FIGHT FOR LIFE AND DEATH

of my property with a master key is a crime for which I hold you responsible. I leave you now to take instant steps for the enforcement of my right."

He turned towards the door, but before he had advanced a step the Clerk laid his hand upon his shoulder and said with grave decision:

"You can leave this room only as a prisoner, Herr Foligno. You are arrested."

The Judge's eyes flashed fire. His right hand sought his breast pocket and he drew from it a knife, but before he could use it the Clerk had seized him by the wrist, and then began a struggle, a fight for life and death between these two powerful men.

Frau Franzka screamed with terror; her husband stood trembling beside her, not venturing to come to the help of the wrestling pair; but I summoned all the physical force that I possessed—my foot pained me terribly as I sprang up, but I did not heed the pain—and I was just in the nick of time; the Judge had torn his hand loose and had raised it for a deadly lunge with the knife. I seized his wrist from behind; the Clerk clutched him by

the throat, and our united strength succeeded in overpowering him, throwing him on the ground, and holding tight his right hand, which still held the knife. It was a terrible moment; my strength was all but gone, for the desperate wretch made frantic efforts to tear himself loose, but help was at hand. The doctor rushed into the room with three gendarmes following him. Without a thought the active little man threw himself upon the Judge, kneeled upon his chest and helped me to hold down the hand that held the knife.

“Seize and bind the monster!” he cried to the gendarmes, “or he will do more mischief with his knife.”

The Judge could not but see that all further resistance was vain. He dropped the knife, which I seized and hurled to the end of the room.

“Let me go,” he said sullenly. “You see that I can no longer defend myself.”

We arose; first the Clerk, then I; I limped back in positive agony to my sofa; my help was no longer required. The Judge, too, arose, and, panting, stood between the Clerk and the doctor. He had given up all hope of

escape, for the three gendarmes blocked all egress from the room, but his feverishly active mind devised new food for hope.

"Captain," he cried to the captain of the gendarmes, "captain, I call you to bear witness to the maltreatment I have received from these madmen, who have attacked me. I command you to stand by me—me, the District Judge. I order you to arrest these people, the Clerk, the doctor and the German Professor. I take all the responsibility upon myself."

The captain's martial countenance betrayed embarrassment. He looked dubiously, first at the Judge, then at the Clerk.

"I do not know what I ought to do," he said, turning to the Clerk. "You command me to arrest Herr Foligno; he commands me to arrest you. After all, he is the District Judge."

The Clerk hastily approached the old, dingy bureau, took a key from his pocket and opened the upper drawer.

"I command you to arrest a murderer," he said. "He, and not Franz Schorn, committed the murder in the Lonely House. Here are the proofs—his bloodstained clothing and the

banknotes which he stole. The responsibility is yours if the murderer escapes and you disobey my commands."

One look into the drawer, and the captain hesitated no longer. An hour afterwards, between two gendarmes, the murderer was driven to Laibach. Half the entire population of Luttach crowded about the court house to see him driven away. The report had circulated throughout the little town with incredible swiftness that not Franz Schorn, but the District Judge was the criminal. When the prisoner was led from the court house to the carriage a fierce shout of rage greeted him. The gendarmes were obliged with their weapons to keep off the indignant populace in order to shield the prisoner from their violence. He, on his part, was now pale and trembling with cowardly fear; curses and execrations followed him as the carriage drove through the crowd.

But at that moment the lovely little Anna was seated on my sofa, thanking me over and over again, her eyes shining with joy—and what, after all, had I done to deserve her thanks?

CHAPTER XIV.

THE END OF THE PROFESSOR'S HOLIDAY.

THE doctor, the Burgomaster and the Captain had driven to Laibach to require personally the instant liberation of Franz Schorn, whose innocence no one longer doubted. The doctor had promised to inform me by letter of the result of his efforts, and he kept his word. On the second day I received a long letter from him. There had been a tremendous commotion in Laibach when the District Judge of Luttach, manacled like a common criminal, had been received at the prison. The ultra Slavonic newspapers had hitherto triumphed in the announcement that the only German agitator in Luttach was nothing more or less than a miserable, ordinary criminal, and now they suffered a terrible blow in that the German agitator was no murderer; the criminal was a man who, although of Italian descent, had always laboured in the Slavonic cause. The Slav party, on the other hand, were half-inclined to swear to the innocence

of the Judge and to stake all on the guilt of the hated German. But the doctor took good care that every scrap of evidence against the true murderer should be well known; he was himself a zealous Slav, but so conscientious and honest a man, and so well known as prizing justice far above national prejudice, that he forced the newspapers of his party, by his truthful declarations, to advocate the cause of Franz Schorn, which they reluctantly did, although not very enthusiastically. They, as well as the doctor, found consolation, however, in the fact that District Judge Foligno was no true Slav, but in fact an Italian. Of course all national prejudices were powerless to influence the court at Laibach. The doctor wrote with real enthusiasm in regard to his reception by the investigating Judge, who had frankly informed him that suspicion of the District Judge had arisen in his mind while he was investigating the matter in Luttach, suspicion which was now substantiated by the admirable report of the Clerk, and that the evidence had created conviction. A most disagreeable task lay before him in having to investigate the actions of his superior in

office, but he would unflinchingly follow his duty. The Attorney General, who had hitherto been firmly convinced of Schorn's guilt, could not but admit the evidence of his innocence and the proof of the Judge's criminality, and the honourable liberation of Schorn from imprisonment must take place immediately. It depended only upon certain formalities. If the Judge could be brought to confess, Schorn's freedom would be on the instant.

This hope, however, of bringing the criminal to an open confession was not destined to be fulfilled. He maintained his innocence with brazen effrontery until his hearing before the court, asserting that he was the victim of shameful intrigue. All the evidence which I, the German Professor, had brought against him was founded, he declared, partly on lies, partly on prejudice. It was not true that I had found his bloodstained handkerchief in the neighbourhood of the Lonely House, for the handkerchief found in the drawer he had never lost. The blood on his handkerchief, his waistcoat, and his trousers came from the wound in his hand due to a fall

among the rocks on the morning of the day of the murder, and of which he had innocently informed the Professor. He declared that I had found him changing his dress when I came to inform him of the discovery of the murdered man in the Lonely House. He had locked up the bloody clothing in the upper drawer of the chest in his sleeping apartment in my presence, and, of course, I knew where it was. How the money and banknotes came in the drawer he did not know, but he suspected that during his absence I had placed them there myself, or had bribed Frau Franzke to put them into the chest in order that the farce might be played of the removal of the chest to my room and the discovery of the bloody articles, which would clear Franz Schorn of the guilt of the murder and throw it upon himself, the District Judge. He would not venture to assert that I was Schorn's accomplice in the crime, although it was possible, but I was certainly his accomplice in the theft of the money. Either to be rid of this accomplice, or to ensure his silence by saving his life, Schorn had cut the rope in the cave.

When the investigating Judge pointed out

to him the improbability, nay the evident falsehood of this clumsy invention, the prisoner stoutly maintained its truth, and even asserted that I had come to Luttach, on the pretense of pursuing natural history researches in Ukraine, in the interest of the German clique there, and to this end I had entered into close relations with Schorn, having as their result this scheme to ruin him. The Judge displayed an eloquence and keenness of intellect in proving the truth of his statements which the investigating Judge could not but admire; but, upon perceiving that he failed entirely in making any impression upon the impartial official, who was himself a Slav, he lost courage, and, declaring that he was too exhausted to endure further questioning, begged to be again conducted to prison.

An hour later the investigating Judge was informed that the prisoner had committed suicide in his cell. How he had contrived to procure the knife with which he stabbed himself to the heart could not be discovered. The bitter opponents of the government and of the court in Laibach maintained that it had been conveyed to him for the purpose of sui-

cide, in order that the court might be relieved from the necessity of presenting before a jury a Slavonic patriot and fellow-countryman as a murderer.

"Since the Judge's suicide may be regarded as a confession," the doctor wrote, "we are momentarily awaiting the liberation of our Franz. We—the good Burgomaster, the Captain and myself—are burning with eagerness to conduct the liberated man in triumph to Luttach. I will tell you by telegram when we may be expected."

The lovely little Anna was paying me a visit when I received the doctor's letter. We read it together. Tears of joy filled her eyes as we came to the end.

"I would rather," she said, "have Franz come back quietly, without any public demonstration; but the good doctor is right; there ought to be some atonement for the unjust disgrace of his arrest, and this must be made by an honourable reception."

All the men of the round table in the "Golden Vine" were of the same opinion.

In the evening, more carried than supported by Mizka and Frau Franzka, I ven-

tured to leave my room and to take my place once more at the round table. I was received with extravagant delight. When I read aloud to the company there assembled the letter from the doctor, they declared unanimously that all Luttach must combine in making brilliant amends to Franz. It was remarkable how one single day had changed the mood of every one. Mosaic, Weber, Meyer, Gunther, and Dietrich, hitherto the most violent opponents of "the German," were now the most zealous to obliterate all remembrance of their opposition. They could not praise Franz sufficiently, and gravely maintained that they never had believed in his guilt.

The telegram arrived on the morning of the next day, announcing that our friends would arrive in Luttach towards noon. I sent it to the Vice-Burgomaster, who had begged me to give him the earliest intelligence, that he might spread it through the town.

The time for festal preparation was short, but it was used diligently in bringing loads of oaken boughs from the grove on the Rusina, in making wreaths and garlands wherewith Schorn's house and the "Golden Vine" were

decorated, for Franz was to be conducted first to the "Golden Vine," where in the garden a cask of the best wine was to be broached, and the Vice-Burgomaster was to welcome him in the name of his Luttach fellow-citizens and to express the joy that all felt in his return, as they drank to his health and welfare. And thus it verily happened. All Luttach was astir by ten o'clock. There were crowds on the road to Adelsberg and on the square before the court house and in the street before the "Golden Vine." When the carriages—two of them—at last came in sight, Franz was sitting in the first with the Burgomaster, while in the second the doctor drove with the Captain. They were greeted with deafening applause and the crowd rushed towards them, all striving to be the first to extend a welcome to Franz Schorn. It was impossible for the carriage to proceed through the crowded streets, when suddenly a stentorian voice exclaimed:

"Make way!"

It was the voice of the gigantic Rassak. He dextrously unharnessed the horses, and, seizing the pole himself, assisted by two savage-

looking fellows—the very ones who, a couple of days before, would have been willing to kill the “murderer” and the “German dog”—on they went to the “Golden Vine.” A dozen men helped to pull and push the vehicle, while Franz kept bowing and smiling in grateful acknowledgment of the shouts of welcome.

The carriage stopped before the gateway of the hotel. Franz would have descended, but strong arms lifted him to Rassak's shoulders, and thus he was carried into the garden. The doctor, the Burgomaster and the Captain followed, laughing. The festal programme was carried out in the garden, except that the Burgomaster's speech and one cask of wine did not suffice. Speech followed speech, and I should have had a fine opportunity of admiring the Slavonic eloquence, if I could have understood a word of it all, but, unfortunately, the words were all Slavonic, even those in which Franz thanked the assembly for its sympathetic welcome. I could only guess at what he said from the shouts of applause. It was a stormy occasion and, after a fashion, a brilliant one, but it was not exactly a comfortable festival. This we had in

the evening at the house of the doctor. My presence there, pretty little Anna declared, was quite indispensable, and so Rassak carried me thither on his burly shoulders. I could not possibly have walked. The doctor had invited only the Burgomaster, the Captain, the Clerk and myself to share in the joy of this first evening of the reunion of the betrothed pair and to be the witnesses of their happiness.

I certainly never passed a more delightful evening. It was a positive delight to me, old man that I am. It warmed my heart to behold the handsome couple so full of bright anticipations for the future. The merriment in our small circle was not loud; we were all somewhat under the influence of the very recent events, but we all quietly rejoiced in being delivered from our depressing anxiety. The doctor himself proposed the health of the young couple, and in a short speech congratulated us all upon the happy chance which had terminated the fearful episode. I noticed that as he spoke the beautiful young girl shook her head as if in disapproval. The toast was drunk with enthusiasm, and Anna

joined in it; but, turning to the doctor and looking at him very gravely, she said:

“It was no chance that saved my Franz. It was God’s own doing. In order to hide his first crime, the Judge attempted a second; he cut through the rope in the cave and, as a result, Franz saved the Professor’s life. If Franz had not thus ventured his own life, he would have been lost. The truth would never have come to light. If the Judge had not cut the rope, the Herr Professor would not have sprained his foot, and he would not have been forced thereby to keep his room, nor would Frau Franzka have tried to procure him space for his collection. Was this chance? No; it was an answer to my prayer. God ordained that Franz should risk his life to find his life.”

“There is logic in your words, child,” the doctor said with a smile; “it is the logic of pious, grateful faith, of which I would in nowise deprive you. But you need not frown, little girl, if I speak of a chance which we must all bless. Chance or Providence, the words express the same idea, that of strangely combined circumstances leading to a certain

end. Was it chance or Providence that brought our dear Herr Professor to Luttach to catch butterflies, and that the Captain sent him on the very first day up to St. Nikolas, whence he returned, thirsty, to the Lonely House? Keep your pious belief, child; it will be a source of hope and happiness for you while life lasts."

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Two weeks after this delightful evening, I left Luttach to return to my northern home. I should have liked to have stayed longer in the charming little town, with people who had grown so dear to me, but my holidays were at an end, and the summer heat is so enervating at my age, that I did not dare to stay longer. I took leave of my dear ones there, but I have promised to return next spring, for I would not have the marriage of the happy couple celebrated without me.

THE END.

